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TWO DIALOGUES

TWO DIALOGUES:

CONTAINING A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE LIVES, CHARACTERS, AND WRITINGS OF PHILIP, THE LATE EARL OF CHESTERFIELD

AND

DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON
(1787)

BY

WILLIAM HAYLEY

A FACSIMILE REPRODUCTION

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

ROBERT E. KELLEY

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

SCHOLARS' FACSIMILES & REPRINTS

1970

SCHOLARS' FACSIMILES & REPRINTS
1605 N.W. 14TH AVENUE
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA, 32601, U.S.A.

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L.C. CATALOG CARD NUMBER: 71-122486
ISBN 8201-1080-9

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University of Florida
1853

INTRODUCTION

When in 1787 Thomas Cadell published William Hayley's *Two Dialogues; Containing a Comparative View of the Lives, Characters, and Writings, of Philip, the Late Earl of Chesterfield, and Dr. Samuel Johnson,* the artistic and, more important, the moral principles which purportedly guided biographers were causes of widespread disagreement. As always, practice outran theory. The last quarter of the eighteenth century is known less for the systematic promulgation of biographical *dicta* than for its readiness to engage in almost endless and often vitriolic controversies over individual biographies. These skirmishes were waged over a variety of questions: How fully should a biographer expose his subject's private life, his weaknesses, strengths, secrets, idiosyncrasies? Should he be ruled by principles of decorum, or is his primary duty to the revelation of fact, no matter how unpleasant, and to the curiosity of the public? How long after his subject's death should a biographer wait before issuing his work? How detailed should his book be? Other questions, of course, regarding biography were—and still are—asked, but the foregoing specify those which most concerned writers of the eighteenth century.

In publishing the *Dialogues* when he did, Hayley joined a succession of opportunists. Johnson had died in December, 1784, eleven years after Chesterfield. Be-

tween 1785 and 1788 appeared many pamphlets, sermons, reflections, poems, Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*—a trial balloon for his *Life of Johnson*—and no fewer than five full-length biographies, including the disputed lives by Mrs. Piozzi and Sir John Hawkins. Apart from Mrs. Piozzi's edition of Johnson's letters (1788), Hayley's *Dialogues* was the last substantial piece of Johnsoniana to appear before the publication of Boswell's biography in 1791. This flood of materials about Johnson inspired numerous attacks in the press against his so-called "friends" who, it was widely felt, had "murdered" his reputation by publishing intimate accounts of his life and career.

But William Hayley (1745-1820) was a man oblivious to the fear of journalistic recrimination. While still young, Hayley retired to Eartham, Sussex, to devote his life to study, writing, gardening, and architecture. He soon became known as the "Hermit of Eartham" and even signed his letters "Hermit." Because he worked hard at being a literary man and managed to cultivate friendships with prominent persons, such as Anna Seward, George Romney, John Flaxman, Charlotte Smith, William Blake, William Cowper, and Edward Gibbon, Hayley made Eartham a retreat for writers and artists. Cowper spent some of his happiest days there. Gibbon, a frequent visitor, called Eartham an "earthly paradise."

Despite his good intentions and high aspirations, Hayley has never lived down his reputation as a man who seldom profited from his own experience. In the nineteeth century he was deprecated in Blake's acid epigrams, Byron's lines in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers,* Gilchrist's biography of Blake, and Swinburne's essay on Blake. He was repeatedly scored for his lack

of humor, his romantic temperament which precluded self-awareness, and his dilettantish ways. On the other hand, he did not lack close friends. William Mason, who published Hayley's last three books, named a son after him. In his biography of Cowper, Robert Southey defended Hayley, praising his delightful conversation, friendly heart, and winning manners. And, later in the century, Samuel Rogers remarked that "if Hayley was formerly over-rated, he is now undervalued." Despite such protests on his behalf, Hayley survives, somewhat unjustly, as a rather absurd figure. Most recently, Richard D. Altick expresses a general attitude when he describes Hayley as "the most laughed-at British man of letters of his time."

Hayley's chief aim was to write for the benefit of mankind. He allegedly helped cure Gibbon of gout by reading him some of his own poetry, and his *Triumphs of Temper* (1781), so a mother wrote him, caused her daughter's transformation from an intractable to a docile girl. These are the only published instances of Hayley's achieving his literary goals. His attempts at drama failed, and *The Triumphs of Temper,* written, according to Southey, to reveal "the various effects of spleen on the female character," was his major poetic success. Hayley's three verse essays, on history (dedicated to Gibbon), on painting (to Romney), and on epic poetry (to Mason), published in 1781 and 1782, reveal sound scholarship and a perceptive critical view. In 1790, at the peak of his literary career, Hayley was offered the laureateship, but, preferring a life of retirement, he declined. Hayley's verse remains almost unknown to modern readers, but there can be little doubt that it enjoyed the respect of many of his contemporaries.

Although Hayley continued to write verse until shortly before his death, from the mid-1780's onward, he devoted his main energy to prose. Most noteworthy among his prose compositions are his biographies of Milton (1796; first published in abridged form in 1794), of Cowper (1803-1804), and of Romney (1809). The last was denounced by Romney's son, the Rev. John Romney, in his *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of George Romney* (1830). He also wrote a memoir of his natural son, Thomas Alphonso, who died before he could fulfill his promise as a sculptor. This book was appended to the second volume of his autobiography, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley, Esq.*, written in the third person and published posthumously in 1823.

Historians of biography, if they mention Hayley at all, do so in unflattering terms. Writing to Cowper on February 7, 1792, Hayley promises that his biography of Milton would be "more candid" than earlier lives of the poet. This claim was to go largely unacknowledged, for the biography of Milton, since its first publication, has been ridiculed as sheer eulogy. Even so, Hayley's apology for panegyric in the *Life of Milton* is worth attending because it illustrates a concept of biography prominent in the age: "Biographers are frequently accused of being influenced by affection for their subject; to a certain degree it is right that they should be so; for what is biography in its fairest point of view? a tribute paid by justice and esteem to genius and to virtue; and never is this tribute more pleasing or more profitable to mankind, than when it is liberally paid, with all the fervor and fidelity of friendship: the chief delight and the chief utility that arises from this attractive branch of

literature consists in the affectionate interest, which it displays and communicates in favour of the talents and probity that it aspires to celebrate."

It was the "fervor and fidelity of friendship" which led Hayley to produce for William Cowper a biography which, though still panegyric, was superior to the life of Milton. Hayley wrote this book, as he confessed in his *Memoirs,* to make Cowper "more known" and "more beloved." In order to fulfill this self-imposed obligation, he was forced to "sink in tender silence," as he put it, when dealing with the delicate matter of Cowper's mental aberrations. Although the prevailing taste of the age promoted such discretion in biography, Hayley's reticence on the subject was prompted chiefly by the pious urgings of Lady Hesketh, Cowper's cousin, who pushed Hayley in the direction of vagueness and euphemism. Hayley's major contribution in this work was his inclusion of a large number of Cowper's letters, a device which he admits obtaining from William Mason's *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mr.* [Thomas] *Gray* (1775).

When writing the *Dialogues,* Hayley was free of the influence of "friendship." There is no evidence that he was personally acquainted with either Chesterfield or Johnson or that he had more than the remotest association with members of their circles.

The *Dialogues* was published about July, 1787, some months after Hayley had circulated the work in manuscript among friendly critics. In his Memoirs he acknowledged that the work proved unpopular; nevertheless, it was reissued from Cadell's folded sheets in 1800 with a cancelled title by A. Cleugh, a distributor of popular and scandalous literature. If, in fact, the

Dialogues did enjoy notoriety, the reasons are certainly more obscure now than they may have been at the time of its publication. That Hayley was not confident of its success is perhaps evident because, contrary to his usual practice, he instructed Cadell to publish the book anonymously. The only other work to be issued without his name on the title-page was the *Essay on Old Maids* (1785), which annoyed many feminine readers. Hayley, in addition, was probably aware that the deprecation of Johnson's biographers had become the sport of the London press.

In writing the *Dialogues*, Hayley may have had in mind William Crawford's *Remarks on the Late Earl of Chesterfield's "Letters to His Son"* (1776), a series of eight righteous dialogues written to counter the influence of Chesterfield's *Letters to His Son* (1773). But it is clear that the main precedent for his use of the dialogue form is Plutarch's construction of parallel lives, a device widely imitated in the eighteenth century as a means of simplifying and telescoping contrasting lives and careers of famous persons. Actually Hayley's organization is less rigid than Plutarch's. The debaters roam rather haphazardly about, abruptly abandoning topics under discussion only to return to them later. This is clearly an attempt to make the *Dialogues* appear realistic by approximating the meandering quality of conversation.

Apart from any purely literary influence, it was natural for Hayley to capitalize on the famous antagonism of such eminent figures as Johnson and Chesterfield. After the publication of his letters, Chesterfield was generally vilified as the great enemy of morality. His name became a byword for pomposity, heartlessness, and shallowness. He was reproached as a man

without allegiance to virtue, truth, religion, and morality. The aristocratic bias of his writing alienated many readers. But as his biographers have carefully shown, Chesterfield was a man of considerable charm, wit, kindness, perception, and good sense, whose letters, far from condoning or promoting deceit and adultery, were filled with warnings against drunkenness, profligacy, gluttony, and other social vices. The public was also inclined to forget the valuable government services Chesterfield performed as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Secretary of State. But contemporary moralists persisted in casting abuse on the *Letters.* Samuel Foote ridiculed him in his play, *The Cozeners,* and such lesser writers as Thomas Hunter, Jackson Pratt, and William Crawford, mentioned above, fulminated against him. In 1788, Chesterfield figured in another dialogue, *Curious Particulars and Genuine Anecdotes Respecting the Late Lord Chesterfield and David Hume, Esq.,* possibly by Samuel Pratt. Cowper satirized him in *The Progress of Error,* and, nearly seventy years after Chesterfield's death, Dickens caricatured him as Sir John Chester in *Barnaby Rudge.*

Samuel Johnson, on the other hand, was regarded as the moral and social antithesis of Chesterfield. Forgetting that Chesterfield and Johnson shared such attributes as good sense and seriousness, the public was eager to contrast Chesterfield's aristocratic reserve and worldly wisdom with Johnson's warmth of heart, appealing idiosyncracies, and sturdy devotion to truth. Johnson, too, had his enemies, and like Chesterfield, he fell victim to scurrilous abuse. But in comparisons between the two men, Johnson won the applause.

Long before Hayley wrote the *Dialogues,* the differ-

ences between the two men had been exaggerated. The numerous printed accounts, many of them by Johnson's early biographers, of the famous quarrel over Chesterfield's alleged refusal to aid Johnson in his work on the *Dictionary* sided almost unanimously with Johnson and used Chesterfield as an example of the faithlessness and meanness that pervaded the literary world. Modern biographers have done much to correct this distortion. Johnson himself was not blind to Chesterfield's virtues, once remarking that he was pleased with his Lordship's elegant manner and breadth of knowledge. Although he said that Chesterfield's *Letters* "taught the morals of a whore, and the manners of a dancing master," Johnson also thought them a "very pretty book," which, without what he regarded as their immorality, could be recommended for every young gentleman. Chesterfield, for his part, admired Johnson's famous letter of rebuke for its cogency and placed it on his table for all to read.

Hayley's *Dialogues* is interesting, however, because it is more than a mere fleshing out of the famous anecdotes surrounding the Johnson-Chesterfield debacle. Indeed, Hayley almost ignores the quarrel. Though not by any means a full-length biography, the *Dialogues* is considerably more than a random collection of memorabilia.

Hayley took pains to establish the authenticity of his piece. Borrowing a technique from the dedications and prefaces to many contemporary novels, he composed an "advertisement by the Editor" which claims that the *Dialogues* is a genuine document written by "Edmund," a student at Cambridge. "Edmund," in turn, wrote an "Introductory Letter" explaining that the *Dialogues* is

a sort of school-exercise debate and detailing the circumstances surrounding its composition.

Despite its relaxed prose, the "Letter" is an important illustration of Hayley's thoughts on biography. He seems, for example, less disposed to discretion than his later biographies indicate. He argues that because both subjects are dead the public has a right to "scrutinize, to estimate, and enforce their respective claims to immortality," and that qualified persons may voice their opinions of the two men. Hayley chooses not to write self-censored biography because, he says, it is too restrictive in its demands for accuracy and consistency, whereas he prefers "spirit and freedom" over a "few grains of logic." Thus by casting his piece in the mold of a fictional exchange of views between two educated men, an Archdeacon and a Colonel, he purchases greater freedom of movement and tone than if he had written in an established biographical mode. The very nature of the *Dialogues* is, in other words, a convenient escape clause. To illustrate, "Edmund" warns that each advocate tends to be overindulgent in defending his hero and in attacking his hero's rival. Exaggerated positions, it seems, are inevitable in such confrontations. In biography, such excesses are flaws. But the fictional debate enables Hayley to forestall charges of prejudice, for the author cannot be held accountable for the speakers' indiscreet remarks and outrageous judgments, or for the colorful figurative language which punctuates the debate.

The organization of the *Dialogues,* as agreed upon by the Archdeacon and the Colonel in consultation with Lady Caroline, the chorus-like arbiter, is rudimentary. The first dialogue focuses on Johnson, the second

on Chesterfield. Each dialogue is ostensibly divided into two sections, the first dealing with the subject as moralist, the second with the subject as writer. Each of the two figures is to be granted equal time. The first dialogue, however, is nearly twice as long as the second. Furthermore, the difficulty of separating Johnson's and Chesterfield's careers into two such convenient categories becomes clear as the contestants repeatedly veer back into moral considerations after brief excursions into literary issues.

Within this framework nothing more than commonplace opinions are offered by the Archdeacon and the Colonel. Neither new information nor original views about Johnson and Chesterfield are introduced. The Archdeacon's defense of Johnson as a self-made man and writer, practical moralist, devout Christian, and learned writer, and his attack on Chesterfield as a man who, in his life and writings, scorned decency and promoted vice, merely echo contemporary sentiment. Similarly, the Colonel's shrill declamations against Johnson's religious superstition, melancholy, social brutality, and ponderous writings, and his support of Chesterfield as a man whose career and writings had been grossly misunderstood and unjustly maligned, hardly break new ground.

We cannot, therefore, look to either speaker for consistent and logical justifications of their heroes' reputations. Despite repeated disclaimers of partiality, the Archdeacon and especially the Colonel constantly allow themselves hyperbolic accusations and defenses. But the exchange between them works to Hayley's advantage, since he can offer opposing attitudes towards Johnson and Chesterfield without having to choose between

them, a tactic which becomes important when certain delicate areas such as the "dark hints" of Johnson's early life come under discussion. In these instances Hayley, through innuendo without explicit condemnation, can introduce controversial matter without risking charges of indiscretion. Thus, Hayley's use of the dialogue frees him from the necessity of drawing firm conclusions about men whose complex and often misunderstood personalities prompted mixed emotions among the public at large.

The *Dialogues* has sometimes been described as thoroughly anti-Johnson in its bias. Sir Joshua Reynolds, who composed two brief dialogues in imitation of Johnson's conversational style, was offended by Hayley's treatment of his friend, saying that Hayley distorted Johnson's true character by relating anecdotes which revealed his distasteful idiosyncrasies. Mrs. Rose thought the *Dialogues* "more distinguished for malignity than wit." Boswell ignored it. The *Monthly Review* (LXVII [December 1787], 457-459), while praising Hayley's "elegance and spirit," scorned the *Dialogues* as merely another mockery of Johnson's memory. On the other hand, the *Scots Magazine* (XLIX [September 1787], 451-452) and the *Gentleman's Magazine* (LVII [June, July 1787], 520-521, 612-614) commended the work. Mrs. Elizabeth Montague, Queen of the Bluestockings, also approved the *Dialogues,* but for precisely those reasons which excited condemnation, namely, its supposed injustice to Johnson. So well known was her antipathy to Johnson that she was suspected by some of being the author.

There is external evidence to suggest that the *Dialogues* was composed partly out of Hayley's pique at

being informed of Johnson's contempt for *The Triumphs of Temper.* Mrs. Rose says that in revenge Hayley ridiculed Johnson in the character of Rumble in his play, *The Mausoleum* (1784). He also took exception in his life of Milton to Johnson's strictures on the poetry of Milton and Thomas Gray. Hayley's only modern biographer, Morchard Bishop, agrees that the *Dialogues* paints an unfavorable portrait of Johnson and argues that Hayley's attitude towards Johnson was influenced by his friend, Anna Seward, Johnson's townswoman and life-long enemy. An exchange of letters between Hayley and the Swan of Lichfield, as Anna Seward was called, printed in the *Gentleman's Magazine* (LXIII [March 1793], 197-199), attests to the correspondents' delight in berating Johnson.

Nevertheless, not all of the evidence points in this direction. In the first place, the *Dialogues* is by no means written to bolster Chesterfield's reputation at the expense of Johnson's. It is doubtful that the Colonel is intended to serve as Hayley's spokesman, for his extreme assertions about both subjects can scarcely be regarded as definitive. Moreover, Hayley's choice of a clergyman as Johnson's defender suggests a moral sanction of Johnson's life and career. Likewise, Lady Caroline's placing two volumes of Johnson's writings on top of a volume of Chesterfield's works in order to provoke the debate is a foreshadowing of the verdict. The Archdeacon is quick to notice this point, saying that the position of the books "hit my fancy as an emblem of justice. . . . I represented to my imagination the decisive triumph of the once indigent and neglected, but truly great Moralist, over the highborn and fashionable Wit, whose vain talents were, during his life, the idol of his

country." Ultimately Hayley implies victory for the Archdeacon, a victory confirmed in rather comic fashion when, at the close of the first dialogue, the Colonel is suddenly converted to the Archdeacon's viewpoint.

The *Dialogues* is not, however, merely a synoptic account of the careers of two eminent and controversial individuals. It is significant because it is a reduction of a biographer's impulses to commemoration and to malice. Biographies designed to commemorate or to annihilate the memories of famous men abound in the eighteenth century, as in every age. Hayley offers, however, alternative views of Johnson and Chesterfield so as, in the long run, to mitigate their differences. At the conclusion, the general impression left is that the stridence which marks the *Dialogues* is muted in favor of more reasonable evaluation of Johnson and Chesterfield. The Archdeacon and the Colonel may be regarded as symbols of the contrary temptations which beset every biographer—the desire to construct a narrative of an appealing, exemplary life and the impulse towards scandal-mongering. In this way, the arguments of these two debaters embody the biographer's obligation to weigh and sift evidence as he tries to evaluate his subject, as he tries to reconcile his subject's virtues and weaknesses in order to present a balanced estimate. The biographer must first compose all available evidence, however conflicting, before he reaches his judgments. But the dialogue form enables Hayley to evaluate and reach at least tentative conclusions at the same time. Lady Caroline is given the final word. She is speaking of Johnson, but her remarks may be applied to Chesterfield as well: "Enough my disputants. . . . Pray allow me to give a new turn to your debate; for I fore-

see, that if you grow warm on this branch of your argument, one of you will make him a saint and the other a fiend; though it is very evident to our cool apprehension, that he was neither, but . . . a very strange compound of both." This passage clearly reveals Hayley's power of discrimination. When read alongside most of the other contemporary memorabilia concerning Johnson and Chesterfield, the *Dialogues* is a persuasive document which must be judged favorably for its lively presentation of the two men.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

M.DCC.LXXXVII.

ERRATUM.

Page 221, laſt line but one, for *ſeverity* read *ſerenity*.

ADVERTISEMENT

BY THE EDITOR.

AS all neceſſary Information, concerning the Scene, the Perſons, and the Scope, of this literary Dialogue, may be found in the following Introductory Letter — I have only to detain the Reader, while I tell him, that it was written by a young Cambridge Scholar, on a Viſit at the Houſe of a Noble Relation, to one of his Intimates at College.

Introductory Letter.

MY DEAR CHARLES,

ACCEPT, with your uſual partiality and animating good-nature, the firſt-fruits of a petty but uſeful talent, which your kind ſuggeſtion firſt tempted me to acquire.

You may remember, that in thoſe attic evenings of our college, when we happily eſcaped from leſs alluring

ſociety, to devote ourſelves together to Demoſthenes or Cicero, you have often ſaid, that an early facility in writing ſhort-hand, would be a deſirable acquiſition for a young ſtudent, who confeſſes a very ambitious, but, I fear, a very vain deſire, to emulate, in due time, thoſe demi-gods of eloquence. Let me now inform you, that when you ſee me again, you will ſee a tolerable proficient in the art you commended. Whether my proficiency has been moſt quickened by my friendſhip for you,

or

or by my native ambition, I ſhall leave my dear Philoſopher to decide, in one of thoſe contemplative minutes, when a recent peruſal of his ſavourite Plato has augmented his characteriſtic propenſity to ſcrutiniſe human nature.

By the way, as the greateſt of philoſophers are a little apt to forget their own private tranſgreſſions, let me whiſper to you, that you are an abſolute traitor for reading Plato alone, eſpecially as we had

agreed to read in concert the particular dialogues that our beloved Gray has honoured with his applauſe. Treachery, however, always includes its own puniſhment; and I have the ill-natured ſatiſfaction of being convinced, that you have but half enjoyed what you have read in my abſence. Perhaps, reading of every kind becomes more delightful and more improving, when we ſhare the amuſement with a congenial mind. As to dialogues, we have, you

know,

know, determined the point, when, in reading thoſe of Cicero together, we found, that his animated and graceful compoſition received new ſpirit from the pleaſing interchange of two friendly voices. Perhaps you are not yet aware, that you are at this moment reading a ſort of preface to ſome new dialogues: ſuch is the preſent that I have deſired you to accept. I ſee your ſurprize, and the perſuaſion that follows it: — but in truth, my friend, you are miſtaken. Had

they

they been compoſitions of mine, I ſhould not, by reminding you of Plato and of Tully, have imitated the ſimple dwarf, ſo happily alluded to by the lively Sterne;—in preſenting my littleneſs to your view, I ſhould not have preſented to you the ſtandard by which you might meaſure it. Nor do I ſend you the production of any writer, who, being leſs dwarfiſh than myſelf, and boldly endeavouring to emulate thoſe literary giants, has attained, in ſome degree, that mar-

vellous

vellous union of grace and vigour, to which they are indebted for their immortal reputation. —— What then do I ſend you? —— In truth, a rarity; and one, I truſt, entirely to your taſte. — I ſend you a faithful copy of real and ſpirited dialogues, that paſſed under the roof, though not in the preſence, of a certain noble Lord, whoſe name is familiar to you, and where converſation, you know, is frequently ſaid to aſſume a truly attic vivacity.—I do not tell you that the incloſed is per-

fectly

fectly in the ſtyle of your idol Plato:—it contains, indeed, no ſublime enthuſiaſm, nor logical ſubtlety on metaphyſical ſubjects; but you will find in it, what moſt modern readers would think, perhaps, more alluring, an ample and free diſcuſſion of all the merits and defects in two eminent and admirable, but very different writers, who, having lately cloſed their career, have left the ſurviving public at full liberty to ſcrutinize, to eſtimate, and enforce their reſpective claims to immortality.—

As

As theſe writers have been conſidered as rivals, you will find that the cauſe of each is pleaded with the affectionate zeal of an enlightened admirer.—As it generally happens in pleadings of every kind, each advocate is tempted, in praiſing his client, to indulge himſelf in ſome ſevere animadverſions upon the oppoſite party.—Yet, for the credit of both ſides, I am perſuaded you will agree with me, that the whole debate is conducted with a liberal diſdain of vulgar prejudice, and that all the

ſpeakers advance no more than what the particular turn of their own mind had induced them to conſider as the dictates of truth and juſtice.

By the rambling ſtyle of their dialogue, you will perceive, that it was real converſation, and no formal compoſition of ſequeſtered ſtudy.—As you are ſo fond of cloſe reaſoning, I mention this circumſtance, to obviate your objection to paſſages that, I am confident, you would otherwiſe conſider as defects.—As to myſelf,

ſelf, being a leſs rigid votary to reaſon than my dear Philoſopher, I am ever willing to ſacrifice a few grains of logic, for an equal portion of ſpirit and freedom.

But it is high time for me to recollect, that, inſtead of hinting to you the value of my preſent (which might, indeed, be prudent, or at leaſt very faſhionable, if I were making a preſent to the public) I ought to tell you, as briefly as I can, the particular incidents that enabled

me to ſend you this ſingular proof of my regard.

It happened, that in two days after my arrival here, my Lord was obliged to leave us, and depart alone, on ſome private buſineſs, for Ireland.—My kind and accompliſhed relation aſſumed the privilege, that ſhe is uſed to take in the abſence of her huſband, and became (to uſe the title I give her, in my idle raillery) Lord Lieutenant of the Library — no trifling dominion, I can

aſſure

aſſure you, but of conſiderable extent, and admirably peopled with ſubjects of every claſs.—You will recollect the deſcription I have given you, of the noble room my Lord has allotted to his books; and particularly the elegant and commodious little receſſes in the apartment, that are excellently contrived to admit a multiplicity of volumes. Our little party conſiſted, for ſome time, of Lady Caroline *, an amiable and old fe-

* A fictitious chriſtian name, ſubſtituted here, and in the Dialogues, for the real title of the ſpeaker.—*Note by the Editor.*

male friend of hers, with her brother the Colonel, and your humble ſervant: for the young people of the houſe are ſtill abroad on their travels.—After breakfaſting in a chearful parlour, that commands a view of the grove, and the lake illuminated by the Sun as he riſes, we have conſtantly moved together into the library. Here, as my paſſion for books is known, and indulged, I have ſometimes loitered, in one of the receſſes, and, peeping into various whimſical authors, have utterly for-

got

got to join in the converſation; and ſometimes, after giving the company a due caution not to talk treaſon, I have endeavoured, while I was ſcreened from their ſight, to advance in my new crooked labour of writing ſhort hand, by catching the diſcourſe of the moment. One morning, when I had thus employed myſelf, I ſhewed my manuſcript to Lady Caroline, not indeed from the motive that influenced a certain philoſophical ſhort-hand writer, who, having a very talkative wife, took down, with-

out the good woman's ſuſpecting his employment, all ſhe ſaid in a week, and preſented to her a legible tranſcript of the whole; when, as my ſtory goes, the honeſt dame was ſo ſhocked by the horrid figure which her peeviſh loquacity made on paper, that ſhe rewarded the Philoſopher, for his elaborate, tender, and ſilent reproof, by correcting her foible.—I was equally fortunate, though on a very different occaſion. My fair couſin, whoſe converſation, I muſt ſay, has as little to fear from ſuch an artifice,

as

as any perſon's can have, was amuſed with my work, and, as we happened to be alone when I produced it, ſhe thus imparted to me the project it ſuggeſted :—" You know, my dear Edmund, we expect our good neighbour the Archdeacon to paſs a few days here; you know what an idolater he is of Doctor Johnſon; and you know the Colonel's equal devotion to Lord Cheſterfield :—we will contrive to engage theſe two literary enthuſiaſts in an amicable debate on their reſpective idols. You

ſhall

ſhall inviſibly catch their dialogue, as you have done this; and, to ſhew that we have acted with no inſidious deſign, we will afterwards allow them the liberty of peruſing, and, if either deſires it, of burning the paper. —So ſaid, ſo done.—I have only to detain you from the dialogue, while I tell you, that, as they are both men of a ſocial and benevolent diſpoſition, they were ſo far from being offended by this theft of their words, that each has had the good-nature to comply with my requeſt,

and not only reviſe, but correct and improve his portion of the debate. So that you receive their ſpeeches, like the authentic printed orations of our eloquent ſenators, corrected in the cloſet, and ſtill faithfully breathing all the warm ſpirit with which they were ſpoken.—I ſhould add, that Lady Caroline ſet a ſort of little trap for the diſputants, which caught them to our wiſh:—ſhe had placed on her own little table in the library, a quarto volume of Lord Cheſterfield, with two of Johnſon's

octavos

octavos upon it, and had left open one of the latter;—the device was ſucceſsful, and very ſpeedily gave birth to the Dialogue which is now before you.

TWO

TWO

DIALOGUES, &c.

DIALOGUE I.

LADY CAROLINE.

PRAY, my good friend, let me aſk you what tempted you to ſmile in ſurveying the books on my table. I hope it implied no cenſure on my choice

THE ARCHDEACON.

By no means. To confeſs the truth, Madam, I only ſmiled (if I did ſmile)

 becauſe

because their position hit my fancy as an emblem of justice.

LADY CAROLINE.

Of justice!—how so?

THE ARCHDEACON.

It represented to my imagination the decisive triumph of the once indigent and neglected, but truly great Moralist, over the high-born and fashionable Wit, whose vain talents were, during his life, the idol of his country.

LADY CAROLINE.

Have a care, my good friend—believe me, *that* idolatry is not extinguished. Remember, my brother is close to you; and such an enthusiast, that if you begin

begin an attack upon his favourite, he will give no quarter to your's.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I would not offend the Colonel for the world: but I am ſure, he has too ſound a judgment, both in literature and morals, to conſider theſe writers on a level.—He may perhaps be partial to the memory of Lord Cheſterfield, from a perſonal acquaintance with that nobleman; and if ſo, I ſincerely aſk his pardon for having alluded to the public failings of his friend.

THE COLONEL.

Your courteſy, my dear Sir, is ſo engaging, and I have in truth ſuch eſteem for your judgment, that I could wiſh to think with you on all points. I am

convinced, indeed, that we agree perfectly in all eſſential articles, though our coats are ſo different in their colour—and you, who have the happy art of uniting zeal and moderation in matters of higheſt moment, will, I am ſure, be candid enough not to think me either a fool or a libertine for admiring my Lord Cheſterfield. As to my perſonal knowledge of him, I can only ſay, it was juſt ſufficient for me to perceive, in a few accidental converſations, that the world were perfectly right in pronouncing him the politeſt man of his time. But it is not on any familiarity that I can boaſt of with this accompliſhed perſonage; it is on a deliberate ſurvey of his life and character, and a long intimacy with his truly attic compoſitions, that I have founded my increaſing

creaſing admiration of his talents and his merit.

LADY CAROLINE.

I told you our enthuſiaſt would catch fire.

THE COLONEL.

Nay, my dear temperate ſiſter, do not affect a prudiſh indifference towards an author you love. Severe as he ſometimes is, and very provokingly ſo, on your ſex, how often have you had the juſtice to join in my eſtimate of his excellence! How often have we lamented together, and with equal indignation, that hypocritical or ſenſeleſs torrent of obloquy, which has been poured upon his aſhes!

THE ARCHDEACON.

Conſider, my dear Colonel, that the cenſure on your favourite, which you repreſent as unjuſt, has not proceeded only from a few individuals, who might be eager to inſult the memory of the eminent from the pride of ignorance, or the malice of envy. It may be regarded as the outcry of an offended nation. A whole people can hardly be inclined to pronounce ſentence on any writer with malignity and ingratitude, eſpecially on the dead. But there are certain unexpected offences in the moral world, which burſt upon us with an aſpect of ſuch enormity, as ſeems to force from the lips of every unprejudiced ſpectator, the moſt rapid and

abſolute

abſolute condemnation. There are ſome violations, I will not ſay of religion and of virtue, but of common ſenſe and common decency, which an honeſt attention to the good of mankind forbids us to tolerate or forgive. I am afraid the ſins of your favourite muſt be ranked in this unfortunate claſs. For my own part, I muſt confeſs I eſteem it ſo dangerous a thing to pour the oil of licentious admonition on the blazing fire of youth, that I wiſh his Letters had been deſtroyed. And ſurely you, Colonel, who never exert the privilege often allowed to your profeſſion, of treating ſerious things with levity, you, I think, can never wiſh to reconcile our minds to the horrid image of a father preaching adultery to his ſon.

THE COLONEL.

Good heavens! my dear Sir, is it poſſible that a man of your candor and diſcernment can join in the barbarous inference that has been drawn from the letter you allude to? If we are to be condemned ſo cruelly, on a few idle or wanton words, that eſcape in ſome luckleſs or unguarded moment, where is the mortal of ſufficient purity to ſupport this rigorous inquiſition? not your great Moraliſt, believe me. If Cheſterfield muſt fall by ſuch a ſcrutiny, ſo indeed muſt Johnſon. Moſt of thoſe who have heard the common anecdotes of this juſtly-celebrated writer, have heard his reply to a perſon, who once aſked him, what he reckoned the higheſt pleaſures of human life? It is well known

that

that he named the two groſſeſt of our ſenſual enjoyments, and without cooling the hot idea by one of his ſix-footed circumlocutions. Shall I therefore call your great moraliſt a preacher of gluttony and incontinence? Truth and juſtice forbid! yet ſurely I might do ſo as fairly as you arraign my favourite, in conſequence of a few ſportive words in a private letter.—But let us not play the inquiſitor with an auſterity that converts into a crime every caſual expreſſion, and is pregnant itſelf with more evil than it profeſſes to correct. Let us judge of books, and of men, not from a few ſcattered failings in ſentiment, ſtyle, or conduct, but from the full and fair impreſſion which a complete and deliberate ſurvey of their blended merits and defects may leave upon our mind.

If

If on this plain and ample ground, you are willing to enter into a friendly debate on the different portions of cenſure and of honour, that may be due both to Cheſterfield and to Johnſon, I ſhall by no means decline the conteſt; for, though I am moſt willing to allow that the latter will have much the more able advocate, I ſhall not deſpair of proving that my favourite (as you juſtly call him) was in truth, "take him for all in all," as good a man, as ſound a moraliſt, and as eloquent a writer, as the renowned philoſopher whom you particularly admire.

LADY CAROLINE.

I never heard a more tempting challenge, and I truſt the Archdeacon has too much ſpirit to refuſe it. As you are

two

two men whom we may ſafely lead into a warm debate without the ſlighteſt fear of its conſequence, I confeſs myſelf very deſirous of ſeeing you engage. Though oppoſite in your opinion, and zealous in your nature, I am perfectly ſure that your controverſy can produce no painful or unfriendly ſenſations in the mind of either; and to me it will afford both pleaſure and inſtruction—it will enable me to ſettle my own confuſed thoughts concerning two authors whom I am fond of reading, and who, to tell you the truth, both delight and diſguſt me to ſuch a degree, that I ſhall be particularly glad to hear the good and evil in both deliberately examined and candidly compared.

THE ARCHDEACON.

They are Beings, my dear lady, that will not admit of a compariſon.—Would you not be angry with me, if I compared my honeſt friend Lion, the noble maſtiff who guards your magnificent manſion, with the ſly and miſchievous Fox that has lately invaded your poultry. Such a compariſon only can be made between the generous Inſtructor whoſe leſſons defend our virtue, and the pernicious Wit whoſe writings only tend to circumvent and deſtroy it.

THE COLONEL.

I admire the ſpirit and ingenuity of your ſimile; but, like a ball thrown with too much force, it rebounds ſo unluckily as to hurt yourſelf: for I muſt inform you,

you, that your honeſt friend Lion was almoſt condemned, a few days ago, to a violent death—and he might indeed have ſuffered with juſtice, not only for arrogating to himſelf much more than his due, but for mangling moſt ferociouſly an excellent little ſpaniel, who dared to lap out of their common diſh, and whom he ought to have regarded as a fellow-ſervant, of equal value with himſelf in the ſight of his bountiful and indulgent maſter.—After telling you this anecdote, I will not be ſo cruel as to add, that I think you have pitched on a perfect emblem of your great philoſopher. Yet allow me to ſay, that he certainly did not reſemble your old philoſophical acquaintance, the Demonax of Lucian (whoſe name has been improperly applied to him) in the want either

either of faculty or diſpoſition "to play "the dog*."

THE ARCHDEACON.

I allow your raillery its full ſcope. I am ready to confeſs, there was a ſurly grandeur in the character of Johnſon. He was uſed to ſpurn the effuſions of vice and folly with a fervent and virtuous indignation, that was frequently miſtaken for brutal ferocity. An inceſſant zeal for moral excellence was his ruling paſſion; and he had an un-

* "Peregrinus uſed to reproach him for laugh-"ing too much, and being too familiar with "people: Demonax, ſaid he, you do not act the "dog well."—See the Demonax of Lucian, tranſlated by Franklin, and inſcribed to Dr. Johnſon; who is called, by the tranſlator, the Demonax of the preſent age.

exampled

exampled power of extracting morality from every incident of life, from every appearance in nature. No man ever exerted more intense or more constant thought, to search into the essence of all goodness, on his own account, and to render his researches beneficial to mankind: it is on this ground that he is generally regarded as a teacher of true wisdom, inferior only to the sacred writers themselves; and it is for the interest of human nature, that we should guard the glory of such a man from the petty cavils of detraction, or the unintended injury of misconception.— For my own part, I should say, indeed, that I am more intimate with him as a moralist than as a critic. In the former light, I revere him as a second Socrates, far superior to the first: and surely you,

Colonel, who, for a modern ſoldier, are ſingularly diſpoſed to moral contemplation; you, the attentive father of well-educated children; you, I ſay, can hardly think of ſeriouſly comparing an author of this character to one whoſe compoſitions (if I may venture to uſe the vehement cenſure of my indignant critic) exhibit only "the morals of a "courtezan, and the manners of a dan-"cing-maſter."

LADY CAROLINE.

I thank you, my dear diſputant, for blending politeneſs with your zeal. I perceive that your tender reſpect to female ears, has led you to ſoften one expreſſion in the very bitter though conciſe invective you have quoted.

THE

THE COLONEL.

We are perfectly acquainted, you ſee, with the ſarcaſtic gall of your great Moraliſt. But let me obſerve, that the keeneſt ſarcaſms, in general, rather prove the virulence, or at leaſt the pride, of the accuſer, than the vices of the accuſed. Indeed, your idol himſelf, to do him juſtice, inſtructs us how to value them, when he ſays, in this very volume, "Ob-
"ſervation daily ſhews, that much ſtreſs
"is not to be laid on hyperbolical ac-
"cuſations and pointed ſentences, which
"even he that utters them deſires to
"be applauded rather than credited." But let me read to you the cloſe of this paragraph, it is admirable:—
"Few characters can bear the micro-
"ſcopic ſcrutiny of wit quickened by

" anger; and perhaps the beſt advice to " authors would be, that they ſhould " keep out of the way of one another." Here you find that your great Moraliſt, thought it hardly poſſible for an author to regard his brethren but with an evil eye; and juſtly, perhaps, we might exclaim, on this occaſion,

His own example ſtrengthens all his laws,
He is himſelf the microſcope he draws.

Rarely indeed did he fail to magnify the defects of ſuch as were placed before him; though his own great qualities were blended with ſuch imperfections, that, if the latter were ſhewn to us through a glaſs, whoſe magnifying power was equal to his own, he would certainly appear as the moſt enormous

monſter

monſter that ever roſe into philoſophical reputation with bitterneſs of language and brutality of manners. Indeed you may recollect, that in his life-time, his own virulence was often retorted upon him. He has been called, you know, "a reſpectable Hottentot," and the Caliban of literature. But alas! what is proved by ſarcaſms of this kind, on either ſide? Little more, I believe, than the lamentable prevalence of jealous and angry paſſions in the heated candidates for popular applauſe. For my own part, as I have, though I am no writer, a paſſionate regard for the real intereſt and glory of literature, I am grieved whenever I ſee authors of great genius condeſcend to hack and mangle one another, like ſervile gladiators, to gratify the rabble, inſtead of combating

in a common cauſe, like free and generous citizens, againſt ignorance and envy, the peculiar enemies of their republic.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Here, my good friend, we perfectly agree—believe me, I lament, as ſincerely as you do, the jealous infirmity of exalted ſpirits, ſo very common among the profeſſors of every art, that many people conſider it as neceſſarily inherent in that fine texture of the human faculties which we denominate genius.—I am far from wiſhing to repreſent Johnſon as utterly exempt from a natural defect, which he had the rare magnanimity to own and the virtue to ſuppreſs; for what can redound more to the honour of any man, and eſpecially of a profeſſed philoſopher, than to have it juſtly ſaid of him,

him, that he aſſiduouſly regulated every improper movement of his heart by a powerful and majeſtic underſtanding?

THE COLONEL.

Rigid truth and juſtice, I believe, could never ſay ſo of Johnſon; but, allowing you for a moment that they might, I can eaſily tell you what would be more honourable, or, I ſhould rather ſay, what would render a philoſopher a much more amiable being in my eſtimation; and it is ſimply this—to poſſeſs a heart ſo kindly faſhioned by nature, that its own native benevolence ſhould ſupply the place of your majeſtic regulator.

THE ARCHDEACON.

That is, you prefer a ready-made philoſopher to one who has had the merit

of making himſelf. In the quiet vale of private life, where no ſort of competition awakens the turbulent affections of the mind, your undiſciplined philoſopher may be all-ſufficient. But in a continual conteſt for popular applauſe, where the faculties are ever on the ſtretch, and where the paſſions frequently blaze in proportion to the activity of the intellectual powers; in ſuch a ſcene, and ſuch you know is the field of literature, we muſt not, I fear, expect the gentle voice of benevolence to be attended to as it ought. Authors, we know, are irritable to a proverb; and how rapidly they are hurried into wilful or blind injuſtice to each other, we ſee but too clearly from every period in the hiſtory of letters. But if ſuch are the infirmities to which their condition expoſes

poſes them, ought we not to conceive a ſignal reſpect for that eminent writer, who conſtantly exerted his philoſophy, and forgive me if I add his religion, to preſerve him from theſe exceſſes? It is in this point of view, that the character of Johnſon appears to me particularly noble. Where can we find an author, who, in running ſo long a career in the ſame thorny field, has done ſo much for the honour of his profeſſion, and ſo little for the gratification of his private ſpleen? Inſulted and reviled as he was perpetually, when did he write a vindication of himſelf, or a ſatire upon his enemies? It does him, I think, infinite credit, to reflect, that with powers particularly formed to make him the firſt ſatiriſt that ever exiſted, he choſe to exert all the energy of his ſpirit in moral

compoſitions of a very different nature; in ſuch as might invigorate the underſtanding, without affording any food to the malignity of mankind. At the time when we may ſuppoſe his reſentment to have been moſt awakened, when his character was acrimoniouſly delineated under the title of Pompoſo, by a ſatiriſt of great celebrity, you may remember that he diſdained to take any kind of revenge, and I do not indeed recollect, that he has mentioned the name of Churchill in any of his writings. His great mind was aware, that in ſome kinds of contention the very act of engaging is diſgrace. He perfectly underſtood an important truth, which few indeed of his fraternity have had ſpirit enough to confide in, or temper ſufficient to attend to, I mean, a maxim which he

expreſſes

expreſſes moſt happily himſelf in cloſing one of his admirable Ramblers, and, if my memory deceives me not, it runs thus: "Whatever be the motive to in-
" ſult, it is always beſt to overlook it;
" for folly ſcarcely can deſerve reſent-
" ment, and malice is puniſhed by neg-
" lect."

THE COLONEL.

An excellent maxim, I grant you, in many caſes; and it reflects as much honour on the preacher, as a good ſermon on humility would reflect on a certain prelate of our acquaintance, whoſe general demeanor might lead us to ſuppoſe, that he knew not even the name of that virtue. The forbearance of Johnſon, according to your own account of it, was the offspring, not of charity but

of

of pride. He did not throw, indeed, upon paper, any deliberate invective against his opponents; but we learn, from the diligent retailers of his conversation, that his common discourse was a continued stream of sarcasms against all who did not blindly acquiesce in his dogmatical decisions; so that the commendation due to his pacific conduct, if rigidly examined, amounts only to this—he never drew out his heavy artillery against his enemies, because he thought that he could demolish them with less trouble, and more security to himself, by the snap of a pocket pistol.

LADY CAROLINE.

Come, come, my dear champions, this is but an idle, and, I think, an

unfair ſort of ſkirmiſh. I muſt be the arbiter of your conteſts, not only as to the iſſue, but the mode of conducting it. Like the preſident at one of our ancient tournaments, I muſt ſee that the knights engage only in a generous and friendly conflict.—Let each be as zealous as he pleaſes to maintain the honour of his own idol, but without reviling that of his antagoniſt. I proſcribe, therefore, all bitter ſarcaſms, as poiſoned weapons, that ought to be baniſhed from our liſts. To drop my metaphor, which, I confeſs, I cannot very well ſupport, let me remind you, that I expect a full and candid compariſon of the two illuſtrious authors whom you reſpectively admire.

THE

THE ARCHDEACON.

My dear Lady, the very idea of ſuch a compariſon, is enough to make our lately departed Moraliſt feel a ſpaſm of indignation in his grave.

THE COLONEL.

If we might literally interpret one of the many poets whom your Moraliſt has vilified, and exclaim with Gray,

E'en in our aſhes live their wonted fires,

then, indeed, I ſhould apprehend that the duſt of Johnſon might be diſturbed, by our comparing him to a writer whom he ſeems to have hated with theological bitterneſs, and whoſe reputation he attempted to ſtab with the ſhort, but en-

venomed dagger of a vindictive monk. But though I am far from thinking your favourite ſo virtuous and pure a character as you ſeem to do, I can readily believe that his ſoul is now happily purified from that leaven of ſour infirmity, which debaſed, I muſt confeſs, in my eſtimation, his ſingular and exalted powers. I can believe, that if his aſhes were indeed inſulted by any indecent outrage (which Heaven forbid) his ſpirit now, like that of Pompey, deſcribed by Lucan,

Would ſmile at the vain malice of his foe,
And pity impotent mankind below.

Believe me, I am ſo far from being an enemy to his memory, that I think his writings and his life are both worthy

of

of being ſtudied. In both, we may find much to admire and emulate, with much to cenſure and avoid. With both, I would only wiſh to take ſuch liberty as he ſeems to allow, where he tells us, that, " if we owe regard to the me-
" mory of the dead, there is yet more
" reſpect to be paid to knowledge, to
" virtue, and to truth *."

LADY CAROLINE.

Very well, my dear, decent brother! After your paying ſo ſerious and juſt a compliment to the grave of his revered Moraliſt, I think the Archdeacon cannot in courteſy decline your challenge, or imagine that the honour of his client may be wounded by a candid diſcuſſion of his cauſe.

Rambler, N° 60.

THE

THE ARCHDEACON.

Before I ſpeak a word in reply to the Colonel, allow me to aſk your Ladyſhip one whimſical queſtion :—You know that we all love and revere you as a matronly model of female virtues. Conſcious of ſuch a character, ſhould you not bluſh with indignation at the thought of being compared to the celebrated Ninon, or to any more accompliſhed courtezan, if any ſuch can be found in the annals of gallantry ?

LADY CAROLINE.

Your queſtion is, indeed, rather whimſical ; and, if I wiſhed to evade it, perhaps I might juſtly ſay, in the language of our lawyers, it is not a caſe in point.—But, as I am eager to promote the

the friendly debate to which my brother has invited you, I will be very frank in my anſwer, and tell you my genuine feelings on your fanciful ſuppoſition. If the odd compariſon you ſuggeſt was candidly made, and chiefly to ſhew what a different aſſemblage of virtues and failings may be found in different ſituations (for all mortals, you know, have ſome failings, and I am far from thinking thoſe of Ninon the only blemiſhes that may be found in our ſex); if, I ſay, your odd compariſon was conducted with that extreme delicacy which it certainly requires, I believe ———

THE COLONEL.

Believe, indeed, my dear prude!— Come; if you are not confident enough to ſpeak the true language of your heart,

heart, let me be its interpreter, and ſay, you are convinced that ſuch a compariſon would rather pleaſe than offend you.—There is a ſimple female ſecret, which every man, who has ſtudied the fair ſex with moderate aſſiduity and intelligence, muſt have diſcovered, and it is this:—The women who are moſt faithful in the practice of virtue, ſtill delight in being told that they are equal in lovelineſs to the famouſly elegant daughters of frailty; and I queſtion, if the cunning Ulyſſes himſelf could have flattered Penelope more agreeably, than by telling her ſhe was as graceful as Helen.

LADY CAROLINE.

I am not ſurprized at this ſentiment from an idolater of Cheſterfield. But

I will anſwer your maxim by another, which approaches, I believe, much nearer to truth:—The men who fancy themſelves moſt deeply ſkilled in the ſcience of reading the female heart, are generally the greateſt ſtrangers to its moſt delicate ſenſations.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Your Ladyſhip is certainly right; a true knowledge of the fineſt work in the creation, is not comprehended in the groſs or vain ideas of a libertine.

THE COLONEL.

I vehemently proteſt againſt your applying that title to my client; as I have engaged to prove him as perfect in his morals as your celebrated Sage.

LADY

LADY CAROLINE.

Be calm, then, my dear enthuſiaſt; for what I want to hear is, a full, candid, and ſimple ſtatement of the real merits and failings in the two celebrated perſons we are canvaſſing: I wiſh to have a fair, comparative eſtimate of both, according to your own plan of conſidering them; firſt, in their general character, as men or citizens; ſecondly, as moraliſts, or periodical lecturers on life and manners; finally, as writers, regarding only their ſtyle.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Pray do not repreſs the Colonel's enthuſiaſm, becauſe he is one of the very few men who may grow warm in a bad cauſe, without catching any infection

from the depravity he defends: indeed, however paradoxical it may ſound, it is his own goodneſs that makes him the zealous advocate of vice; for the truth is, he has himſelf ſo generous and pure a heart, with ſuch a quick delightful perception of elegance and wit, that he gives the poſſeſſor of theſe enchanting qualities, unbounded credit for virtues which were foreign to his nature.

THE COLONEL.

I aſk your pardon, my dear flattering encomiaſt. I muſt not allow you, in thus holding out an unmerited and dazzling crown to your antagoniſt, to trip up his heels without beginning to wreſtle. You miſtake me entirely, if you

you ſuppoſe that I conſider my Lord Cheſterfield as a perfect character,

"*A faultleſs monſter, which the world ne'er ſaw;*"

or as even poſſeſſed of that true greatneſs and purity which ſome of our Engliſh worthies have attained. I only ſay, that with ſplendid and moſt engaging talents, he had neither more nor worſe vices than your exalted Philoſopher, and that he is no leſs entitled to the kind remembrance of his country. This, I think, an impartial diſcuſſion of their lives and compoſitions may render as evident, as it is that they were both beings of the human ſpecies.

LADY CAROLINE.

However ſtrong and ſincere you may be in this opinion, I doubt a little your being able to perſuade even our candid Archdeacon to agree with you; and, I believe, the good folks of the world, in general, who delight in that ſhort and eaſy mode of proving their great love for goodneſs, which they find in idolizing a name for imaginary perfection; theſe good people would be ſhocked at your idea, and perhaps exclaim againſt you, as a horrid profligate, endeavouring to confound all the principles of right and wrong: but, as we give you full credit for motives directly oppoſite to theſe, I beg we may purſue this amuſing diſquiſition. Some familiar words of Johnſon, that I have juſt recollected,

recollected, ſuggeſt to me a plan for purſuing it, in the faireſt and moſt ſatiſfactory manner. You may remember, in the journal of his fellow-traveller, when he is diſpleaſed with Lord Hailes, " for publiſhing only ſuch memorials " and letters as were unfavourable for " the Stuart family, he ſays, If a man " fairly warns you, I am to give all " the ill, do you find the good, he " may."—Do not you recollect this paſſage, my friend. I am ſure my brother does; becauſe, though I cannot repeat the whole ſentence regularly, I know it ends with thoſe remarkable words, " I would tell truth of the two " Georges, or of that ſcoundrel King " William:" words, I believe, that have had no little ſhare in kindling the Colonel's animoſity againſt your Philoſo-

pher.—But let us adopt the preceding maxim, of one giving all the good, and another finding the ill. Let the Archdeacon begin, by ſetting forth every thing that tends to exalt and throw a luſtre on his favourite Moraliſt; my brother may add the dark touches, but without any ſarcaſtic aggravation of the defects he may diſcover.—Then exchange your office; let the Divine freely diſplay all the vices of Cheſterfield, and the Soldier appear, I will not ſay his defender, but his apologiſt.

THE COLONEL.

Agreed!

THE ARCHDEACON.

Your Ladyſhip is undoubtedly very good, to aſſign me only that ſort of taſk in

in which my duty and inclination may go hand in hand; for, according to your inſtructions, I have only to ſhew the genuine dignity of the genius and virtue I admire, and to point out the real deformity of that diſſolute elegance, which has made, I think, too favourable an impreſſion on the fancy of my friend. Yet, honourable and pleaſing as I muſt own the office you have allotted me, I muſt alſo confeſs, what happens, I believe, very frequently to men ſurprized by unexpected honours, that I feel my mind dazzled and bewildered by the ſplendor of my charge, and that I am diſtreſſed by no little fear of diſappointing your expectation.—But let me reflect how I may beſt ſhew my obedience to the ſpirit, though not the letter of your command. To enumerate all

particulars that do honour to Johnſon, is what I am ill-prepared to do, and what, indeed, could hardly be done in converſation; for it would be to give an extenſive review of a long, laborious life, continually ennobled by new acquiſitions of knowledge, or by new acts of goodneſs and magnanimity. I muſt content myſelf with only ſtating to you, as forcibly as I can, a few of the moſt ſtriking conſiderations, that have conſpired to impreſs me with peculiar veneration for this rare and exalted character. Let me remind you, then, that he was the ſon of a petty, provincial, neceſſitous bookſeller; that, ſo far from having received any external advantages from nature, his figure was hideous, even in youth, to ſuch a degree, that Pope, you know, was afraid he could hardly

hardly be admitted as a preceptor into a noble family, from the horrid convulſive diſtortions with which he was afflicted.—Good Heaven! when I conſider from what humble and diſadvantageous obſcurity he ſtarted, and what pure eminence he attained, although penury, deformity, and diſeaſe were conſpiring to impede his advancement, I not only perceive the marvellous merits of the man, but feel a ſublime delight in contemplating the native powers of genius, and the genuine dignity of ſcience, ſupported only by virtue.

THE COLONEL.

Forgive me, if I remark a little miſtake in your eſtimate :—what you conſider as impediments in his way, were ſprings that puſhed him forward.—From

his

his own account of his feelings, he muſt have had ſuch a conſtitutional indolence, that I queſtion if any motive, leſs cogent than poverty, would have induced him to ſupport the burthen of literary labour—except perhaps his ſecond ſpur of perſonal deformity, which, "*in a great Wit* (to uſe the words of "your old philoſophical acquaintance "my Lord Bacon) *is an advantage to* "*riſing* *."—But I aſk your pardon for interrupting you ſo ſoon, as I dare ſay you have many more obſervations to favour us with, that may fall within the firſt diviſion of our ſubject, as my ſiſter has chalked it out for us, and illuſtrate the character of Johnſon as a man.

* Bacon's Eſſay on Deformity.

THE

THE ARCHDEACON.

Recollect, my dear Colonel, the beautiful verſes that you repeated at breakfaſt with ſo much enthuſiaſm, and with perfect ſympathy in the ſentiment they expreſs:

Ah! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The ſteep where fame's proud temple ſhines afar!
Ah! who can tell how many a ſoul ſublime
Has felt the influence of malignant ſtar,
And wag'd with fortune an eternal war;
Check'd by the ſcoff of pride, by envy's frown,
And poverty's unconquerable bar *!

Thouſands have had the aid of thoſe ſprings which you conſider as inſtru-

* Beattie's Minſtrel.

mental

mental to the elevation of Johnſon, but how few have riſen, I will not ſay to equal, but even to ſimilar diſtinction! Recollect, that from an obſcure, neceſſitous, and unſightly being, he raiſed himſelf, not into pomp and opulence, for he had a noble contempt of both, but into that more enviable eminence of character, which enabled him to aſſociate with the rich, the powerful, or the accompliſhed, and made him univerſally revered, as the great teacher of morality, to the moſt enlightened nation of the globe.—If we ſurvey him in the period of his early difficulties and diſtreſſes, in that ſtate, which has induced ſo many needy adventurers to act the part of a literary Therſites, and obtain a miſerable ſtipend by ludicrous ſcurrility or declamatory malevolence,

how different, how pure, and, I may ſay, how magnanimous was his employment? When his firſt proſpect of ſupporting himſelf as a poet was blaſted, by the failure of his Irene (a performance, I own, that could not ſucceed, for his genius was confeſſedly not dramatic) his high ſpirit diſdained to debaſe itſelf either by flattery or detraction, the two ordinary reſources of an indigent, diſappointed author. He ſought a refuge from the miſeries of want, in working on that uſeful, that ſtupendous monument of literary labour, his dictionary, or in producing thoſe periodical papers, which are juſtly regarded as maſterpieces of moral admonition.—Inſtead of finding him betrayed by penury into vicious or diſhonourable occupation, we find him not only labouring moſt laudably

dably for the real good of mankind, but leading a life as pure as thoſe ſublime leſſons of morality which he beſtowed upon the world.—We find him, though under the preſſure of indigence, yet contriving to exert that virtue of nobleſt luſtre, which moſt dignifies the opulent and the great; I allude to his charity, which was ſo perfect, ſo truly chriſtian, that he was ready to ſhare the little pittance he had with any brother in diſtreſs, more neceſſitous than himſelf.—Recollect, I beſeech you, that marvellous effort of a great and a tender mind, the compoſition of his admirable Raſſelas, in a few days and nights, for the purpoſe of relieving a ſick and indigent mother.—Heavens! my dear Colonel, if ſuch an act of literary heroiſm had been diſplayed among your admired

Athenians,

Athenians, they would have raiſed a ſtatue to the author, in ſome diſtinguiſhed part of their city, and have worſhipped him as an amiable demi-god, whom filial piety had exalted to the ſtars.

LADY CAROLINE.

Well obſerved, my good friend! you will certainly make a convert of me, for tears ſtart into my eyes whenever I hear a great character celebrated for uncommon tenderneſs or generoſity to a parent; and I am wonderfully diſpoſed to admit, that ſingle virtue as a ſufficient proof of perfection.

THE COLONEL.

I have ever allowed, that there are ſeveral glorious points in the character of Johnſon: you have ſeized and diſ-

played them very forcibly.—I perfectly comprehend your pointed addreſs to me concerning our old friends the Athenians. You allude to my having ſaid, laſt night, that much as Johnſon had been celebrated for his intimate acquaintance with ancient literature, there is not a particle of true atticiſm, or of Roman urbanity, in all his compoſitions. I really think ſo—but of that when we come to ſpeak of his writings. At preſent, I am to confine myſelf to his character as a man; and in that point of view, you muſt forgive me for ſaying, that however great his faculties and virtues may have been, they were evidently balanced by imperfections of equal magnitude and weight. As to your remark on the marvellous purity of your Moraliſt in domeſtic life, I will only make

this

this ſhort reply :—If I thought it decent or fair to purſue ſuch a ſcrutiny, I am convinced, by the report of his aſſociates, that we ſhould find his early days as much diſgraced by actual licentiouſneſs, as thoſe of my noble client, whom you have called a libertine.—But woe to the man, who from wanton or malevolent curioſity, attempts to violate the ſacred receſſes of domeſtic privacy, for the miſchievous ſatisfaction of expoſing the ſecret or forgotten ſins of the illuſtrious dead. Far be it from us, my friend,

" *To draw ſuch frailties from their dread*
" *abode.*"

I will not therefore allow myſelf to ſpeak of any but his moſt open and ſelf-

evident imperfections. These indeed were so great, that whenever I review his character in my mind, he is one moment an object of my idolatry, and the next of my abhorrence. For, if I recollect what you have so justly commended, his noble readiness to relieve the distressed, I remember also, that he was an absolute Cain, who could not bear to behold the accepted sacrifice of a brother. Indeed he assassinated not a single Abel, but continually levelled his murderous sarcasms against the literary life of all his numerous brethren, the whole tribe of our contemporary authors. I believe it would be impossible to name one of this tribe, to whom he ever gave a full and fair portion of praise untainted by envy; and if we review his poetical Biography, we shall find

his

his detractive malevolence moſt conſpicuous in the lives of thoſe who lived and wrote in his own time.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I will not attempt to extenuate the baſeneſs of ſuch envy, by calling it univerſal—on the contrary, I am perſuaded it is by no means ſo common as we imagine; and we may thus account for the frequent imputation of this hateful quality, where it has not really exiſted: —All human works muſt have ſome imperfections, and in every art a profeſſional judge will ſee and feel theſe with peculiar quickneſs and force. He may fairly deſcribe them according to his feelings; yet, his deſcription being much ſtronger than the impreſſion which the object has made on leſs qualified judges,

will to them, perhaps, appear as the ſuggeſtion of envy, though in truth it is no more than the natural reſult of intelligent and keen perception.

THE COLONEL.

Your reaſoning is ſo ingeniouſly good-natured, that, for the honour of literature and the arts, I ſhall wiſh to find it generally true.—In the caſe of Johnſon, however, I am ſo far from being able to admit it, that I am convinced, if we can on any occaſions exculpate him from the charge of envious detraction, it muſt be on very oppoſite principles—not from the warmth and acuteneſs, but, to ſpeak in his own phraſe, the frigidity of his feelings. We know, indeed, that he was not faſhioned by education, by habit, or by the original texture of his frame,

ſrame, to enjoy any nice diſcernment of real delicacy, in life, in manners, or in compoſition. In truth, it is hardly poſſible that ſuch diſcernment could exiſt in a man whoſe common behaviour was as coarſe as his paſſions were turbulent, and who ſhews us, in every point of view, that detractive malignity, and over-bearing arrogance, were his prevailing characteriſtics,

THE ARCHDEACON.

Surely I may retort upon you, with more juſtice, that it is not poſſible for theſe odious qualities to have prevailed in a character, whoſe name is held up to public veneration by ſuch a little hoſt of recording friends—in a man whoſe talents and virtues afford ſuch ample ground for panegyric, that his

death has almoſt converted the whole circle of his acquaintance into biographers or memorialiſts.

THE COLONEL.

Well might the ghoſt of Johnſon exclaim, with poor Jaffier in the tragedy,

"*Hide me from my friends!*"

For it is indiſputably true, that his moral character has ſunk, in the good opinion of the world, in proportion as the memorials have appeared which were deſigned to do him honour. Indeed, it frequently happens, that an injudicious partizan does more miſchief to his idol, than the worſt of enemies. But, as the little flock of his biographers,

phers, though certainly not birds of the ſame feather, are all amuſing in their way, I am far from wiſhing to ſtrengthen my arguments in our debate by treating them with aſperity. I ſhall only ſay, therefore, what, if the lady who leads the band were preſent to hear me, ſhe would not, I truſt, conſider as any breach of that courteous reſpect, which is ſurely due both to her ſex, and to her talents:—I ſhall only ſay, that this little tribe of biographers ſtrike my fancy as a group of buſy children, who having got a gilt ſhilling, are very eager to exhibit it as a guinea, each rubbing it with an air of confidence, to encreaſe its golden luſtre, but ſhewing, alas! at every rub, ſtill more of that baſer metal, which they

they are all ſo ſolicitous to repreſent as gold.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Not ſo, my good friend.—Let us rather call them an honeſt, philoſophical ſet of people, who, in analyſing a magnificent maſs of the richeſt metal, tell us truly the real weight of the pure ore, and fairly exhibit the little portion of natural droſs which their experiments diſcovered.—But to quit our metaphor, and ſpeak the plain language of truth and reaſon; Is not the inceſſant kindneſs, the laſting veneration, which Johnſon has received from his moſt intimate aſſociates, a full proof, in itſelf, that his excellencies as a man, and a companion, were infinitely ſuperior to his failings? What more

more touching reſt of merit can we deſire for any character, than to find, that he was revered, even to idolatry, by his friends? Does not the high reputation of Socrates reſt ſolely on this foundation? He has been the idol of ſucceeding ages, becauſe he was juſtly idolized by thoſe faithful and accompliſhed recorders of his companionable perfections, Xenophon and Plato.

THE COLONEL.

Aſſuredly:—and as often as we review their affectionate accounts of him, particularly the very ſweet and ſimple portrait exhibited by the firſt, we ſympathize in the tender enthuſiaſm of the friendly memorialiſt. But what would the world have thought of the great

Pagan

Pagan Sage, if his fair and elegant friend Aſpaſia had left us a little book of philoſophical anecdotes, in which we might read, that the great philoſopher had rewarded her, for allowing him a noble apartment, and all the comforts of her magnificent houſe, by teazing, with argumentative and imperious petulance, her good, aged mother? What would the world have thought of him, if Xenophon had given us the narrative of an excurſion, made to amuſe his inſtructive maſter, by ſhewing him the bleak mountains of Thrace, and had told us, that when he preſented him to his venerable old father, who dwelt in that country, the Sage, inſtead of entertaining his reſpectable hoſt with colloquial wiſdom, worried him ſo ferociouſly, that the

luckleſs

luckleſs diſciple muſt have wiſhed for a muzzle, to ſecure his parent from the mouth of the outrageous brute, whom he had ventured to lead from Athens to a diſtant province, for the ſake of ſhewing him as a conſummate philoſopher? Again, I may ſay, what would the world have thought of him, if the ſublime Plato himſelf had repreſented his admirable inſtructor as the moſt ſelfiſh and diſguſting glutton that ever appeared at a table? — Such are the points of view in which your favourite Moraliſt has been exhibited to us by his various biographical aſſociates. Your excellent memory, my good friend, will readily ſuggeſt the paſſages to which I have alluded. I am far from ſuſpecting all or any one of theſe writers of a treacherous intention to degrade their

hero ;—yet, what enemies could have contributed more to his degradation as a man, in the eyes of every candid and impartial reader ?—I will not ſay it has happened by their fault; let us call it rather a fatality, for the accompliſhment of literary juſtice — and it affords us an incentive to univerſal candour and benevolence, to contemplate the man, who had written the lives of many with a great portion of detractive malignity, deſtined to have memorials of himſelf ſo written, by a ſucceſſion of his friends, that his character muſt ſink in the public eſteem, exactly as faſt as their friendly records appear.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I cannot agree with you ; for I cannot perceive, in my own mind, the effect that

that you ſuppoſe univerſal. I cannot perceive that I ought to eſteem him the leſs as a man of virtue, becauſe I am told it was his cuſtom to eat in eager ſilence; though, I confeſs, it does not appear very conſiſtent with the delicacy of friendſhip, to commemorate a peculiarity ſo diſguſting.

THE COLONEL.

Well, my good friend, we will not argue this point. In favour of your great Moraliſt, I conſent to ſtrike the name of gluttony from the catalogue of vices. But allow me to aſk you, if you could revere even the Pagan Socrates, as a philoſopher, on finding him deficient in thoſe primary conſtituents of a great moral character, juſtice and fortitude?

THE

THE ARCHDEACON.

Moſt certainly not; and, let me add, that my veneration for Johnſon is partly founded on my idea of his having poſſeſſed thoſe noble qualities in a ſuperlative degree.

THE COLONEL.

To me he appears defective in both. Indeed we violate the name of Juſtice, when we ſuppoſe her to have dwelt in the ſpirit of a man who inceſſantly detracted from all eminent characters, and who hardly allowed any mortals to differ from him in opinion, without repreſenting them as worthleſs or inſignificant; yet Johnſon, for ſome time, contrived to ſupport a moral reputation as marvellouſly as Mithridates ſupported his

his life. Your Philosopher, after fortifying his good name by many tumid sentences of morality, ventured on such envious gratifications as would have been immediate death to the credit of any other man; and the chemical king of Pontus, you know, as historians inform us, after breakfasting on antidotes ventured to dine safely on poison.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Take care, my lively friend, that you are not hurried yourself into the very injustice which you impute to my Philosopher. I allow you, that his strong and gloomy imagination very frequently discoloured his judgment. I lament the prejudices which led him to insult the poetic genius of Gray, and the genuine philanthropic heroism of our political

 saviour,

ſaviour, King William. Yet many allowances ought to be made for the prejudices of his early life, and that terrific ſtructure of his nerves, which gave ſo dark a tinge to his mind. As he courageouſly ſpoke his true ſentiments on all occaſions, it is ſurely evident, that he poſſeſſed the ſpirit of intentional juſtice, at leaſt, and of unqueſtionable fortitude. Where he was miſtaken, let us rather pity his errors, than emulate his acrimonious ſeverity.

THE COLONEL.

With all my heart, when I have once convinced you how very far he was from being that accompliſhed, practical Moraliſt, which you ſeem to have ſuppoſed, and how inferior, at leaſt in my eſtimation, to that calumniated nobleman, whom

whom with a proud baſeneſs, peculiar to himſelf, he firſt complimented, and then inſulted, without any real provocation. —Such was the juſtice of your great Moraliſt; who has indeed as little claim to critical mercy as any man can have; for he was himſelf a black huſſar in the field of learning, who never gave quarter, or, I ſhould rather ſay, he diſplayed his powers with a cold, phlegmatic, inquiſitorial cruelty; and, as an eccleſiaſtical friend of ours ſaid the other day, with an extempore paraphraſe of the famous old verſe in Ovid,

On their own rack, 'tis righteouſly decreed,
Bloody inquiſitors themſelves ſhall bleed.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Pray obſerve, my honeſt but too warm avenger of injuſtice, how your accuſation, by its own vehemence, defeats at leaſt a part of itſelf. The force with which you deſcribe the barbarity of Johnſon, ſurely tends to clear him of your ſecond charge, the want of courage.—Indeed no charge can have leſs foundation. I queſtion if there ever exiſted a man who diſplayed more invariably, in the character of an author, a more abſolute exemption from cowardice.

THE COLONEL.

So far from it, that you ſhall find, he repreſents himſelf as a moſt pitiful coward, and that too on one of thoſe occa-

ſions

ſions in which every man is allowed to aſſume the language of heroiſm. Every lover, let him be as unlike a hero as he may, is privileged by nature to tell his miſtreſs, in a ſong, that he will baniſh her vexations, and protect her from all the world. But what ſays your brave author, in ſinging to his dulcinea? why truly this literary Cæſar of yours cries out, like a poor ſplenetic pretended Philoſopher as he was,

Tir'd with vain joys, and falſe alarms,
With mental and corporeal ſtrife;
Snatch me, my Stella, to thy arms,
And ſcreen me from the ills of life.

Now put the ſtanza into proſe, and his amorous entreaty is this—" I am " too great a coward to bear pain, either

" in mind or body: pray protect me, my
" good bolder girl, and hide me with
" your petticoats from the horrors of my
" existence."

LADY CAROLINE.

Oh abominable!—Sir, this wicked brother of mine is laughing at us simple folks, for our serious attention to him. I am confident he does not give us his genuine sentiments; for, three days ago, I heard him praise the easy natural tenderness of the very lines which he has now travestied so unfairly.

THE COLONEL.

Well, if you will not take my present remarks for sound criticism, you must at least allow that they equal in truth

truth and candour thoſe critical obſervations which the great Moraliſt has made on Prior, Hammond, &c.—But to be very ſincere with you; I perceive from this converſation, how very apt the mind is to take a ſtrong bias in every controverſial career; for ſince I began to compare Johnſon in my thoughts with one of my literary favourites, whoſe memory I think greatly injured, all the imperfections of the gloomy Moraliſt have been ſo multiplied and magnified, in my fancy, that he ſtrikes me in this moment, not as one, but an aſſemblage of unamiable characters:—in religion, a ſlave to ſuperſtitious horror; in politics, a ſervile bigot; in familiar ſociety, an inſufferable tyrant. I give you my real opinion as it riſes in my mind.

How far that opinion is the reſult of deluſive prejudice, or of a fair though rigid eſtimate, you are certainly qualified to judge; becauſe I profeſs to have no knowledge of the character we are diſcuſſing, except what I have derived from his printed works, and ſuch memorials of him as are generally known. If I am wrong, I entreat you to correct me, for I wiſh not to injure any being alive or dead; and, without retorting upon him the vile abuſe which he beſtowed on King William, I will copy his language ſo far as to ſay, I would tell truth of a ſplenetic ſavage.

THE ARCHDEACON.

You are certainly too ſevere, and for this reaſon;—the foibles of Johnſon ly-

ing, if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion, in the ſuperficies of his character, diſguſt you to ſuch a degree, that you do not allow yourſelf to ſearch fairly into his deeper and more noble qualities.—But, as it happens in his language, when you have once digeſted his hard words, you feel yourſelf invigorated by the ſtrong reaſon they contain; ſo with regard to the man, if you are once reconciled to the roughneſs of his manners, you will clearly perceive his many Chriſtian virtues, for which indeed he might have obtained credit more readily, had they not been ſo rudely covered. Yet we cannot deny the merchant to be rich, who abounds in gold, becauſe he keeps it in a bag of the coarſeſt texture.

THE COLONEL.

Your illuſtration is very ingenious, but not perfectly juſt. Though I agree with you as to the coarſeneſs of the purſe, I cannot allow your gold to be genuine.—To ſpeak more ſeriouſly on a ſerious ſubject; I am aware that Johnſon is held up to our veneration for the ſanctity and ſoundneſs of his religious character; but ſurely, my dear reverend friend, it is an injury to the divine doctrine you profeſs, to conſider this man as the model of a Chriſtian. I can admit, with my whole heart, that he was a ſincere believer in Chriſtianity; but, to my apprehenſion, no real believer ever ſucceeded worſe in ſeizing the true ſpirit of our indulgent and animating religion. His piety, great as it is called, was ſo far from being perfect, that it neither

taught

taught him how to live nor how to die—it neither inſpired him with benevolent gentleneſs towards his fellow-creatures, nor with a chearful reliance on the beneficence of his God.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Without an oſtentation of meekneſs towards men, it taught him real humility towards his Maker. His piety appears to you debaſed by an exceſs of terror; but ſurely it argues not any weakneſs or depravity of ſpirit to tremble before the throne of the Almighty.—If, indeed, the gloomy caſt of his devotion could require any excuſe, is it not ſufficiently excuſed by that morbid hereditary melancholy, which preyed upon his mind, and rendered him, with all his rare faculties, not leſs an object of

pity

pity than of admiration. This idea, instead of diminishing, increases my respect for his character—assuredly, it does him honour to reflect, that by long and profound meditation, he was himself the architect of his virtues, and that his imperfections were woven into the texture of his frame. His marvellous merits were all his own, and his blemishes the work of nature.

THE COLONEL.

At length, my good friend, we meet on such ground, as I have not the least inclination to dispute with you.—Believe me, I am as willing as you can be to consider the failings of Johnson as constitutional — all I contend for is this, that with so peccant a constitution, he may not be proposed to us as a model

del either of morality or religion.—The ancient philoſophers, who maintain, you know, that virtue is not to be taught without the aſſiſtance of a proper natural diſpoſition, would have not only denied his actual poſſeſſion of conſummate virtue, but the poſſibility of his acquiring it; ſince, inſtead of looking on the face of nature with true filial tenderneſs and gratitude, his gloomy ſpirit made him regard her only as a malicious ſtep-mother, who exerted her ingenuity to embitter his exiſtence. An affectionate delight in the viſible creation, appears to me as neceſſary to perfect morals, as the ſpring is to the perfection of the year. How utterly deſtitute of that ſentiment your great Moraliſt muſt have been, we may clearly perceive by his indignation againſt an

humble

humble and blamelefs woman, for pretending to be happy in fuch a world.— Yet, dark as this ftate of exiftence appeared to him, he could not practife even the wife precept of his pagan friend Juvenal, and (to quote his own fpirited verfe)

" *Count death kind nature's fignal of re-*
" *treat.*"

When I find him fo inferior in real purity and ftrength of mind to the pagan moralifts, I fhould think myfelf abfurd indeed, if I revered him as a model of Chriftian excellence, efpecially when I recollect, that with all his profound reverence to our bleffed religion, he feldom opened his lips without finning againft the fpirit and the letter of the Gofpel,

Gofpel, in calling a brother fool.—I am as ready as you are, my good friend, to afcribe both the gloominefs and the afperity of his mind and manners to the vitiated organs of his very wonderful frame—indeed, the more I contemplate his character, the more I am convinced that the diftemper which afflicted his body, if I may ufe a fcriptural expreffion, entered into his foul. I am willing, therefore, to confider his defects rather as misfortunes than as crimes; although they appear to have operated againft his happinefs with the double force of calamity and of guilt. For, with uncommon powers to fupport either bodily or mental exercife—with all the advantages he derived from his fucceefsful labour, and the liberal kindnefs of his more intimate admirers—he feems

to

to have been, through every period of life, a very miſerable being; and no one, I believe, were it poſſible, would conſent to purchaſe his rare faculties, by ſubmitting to reſemble him in every particular.—But whatever the ſum of his imperfections may be, after that is ſubſtracted, there ſtill remains ſuch a portion of real merit, as will probably ſecure immortality to his name and writings. Believe me, I am ſo far from being an enemy to his fame, that I heartily wiſh the public would diſcover a more liberal diſpoſition to pay him ſepulchral honours. The ſubſcription for his monument ſeems to languiſh, in a manner that reflects diſgrace on this opulent and poliſhed country. I wiſh, my good friend, that you and I knew how to quicken the munificence of the king-

dom

dom on this occaſion.—The nation that wiſhes to be ennobled by the production of future great characters, ought to be ſplendid in her memorials to departed genius.—I am amazed, that the zealous admirers of Johnſon, have not been more eager to render him this tribute, ſince his title to ſuch a diſtinction is admitted by thoſe who had no perſonal attachment to the man, and who even think him, as I do, a ſtrange compound of the moſt attractive and moſt diſguſting qualities, that ever met in the formation of an author.—But I have ſaid full enough and perhaps too much of his failings. Soldier, as I am, I aſſure you, it is more pleaſant to me, on this occaſion, to defend than to attack. Let me turn therefore from your reſpected Moraliſt, and haſten to the vindication

of my injured favourite, the elegant, the witty, the accomplished Chesterfield.

LADY CAROLINE.

Not so fast, my dear hasty advocate. I cannot suffer either of my two disputants to evade any of the points that they have undertaken to debate. Pray recollect, that you are still to discuss the merits of Johnson as a writer.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Madam, the Colonel is a soldier of too much experience, to be very eager in attacking a fortress of any kind, that is secured by art and nature against every assailant. Let me be allowed to call the miscellaneous essays of Johnson, a heaven-defended city, whose palla-

dium

dium is pure and perfect morality. As this can neither be overthrown nor pilfered by the boldneſs or ingenuity of any Diomed or Ulyſſes, the fabric, in which this eternal guardian is magnificently lodged, muſt be impregnable and immortal.

THE COLONEL.

Alas, my good friend! how many of ſuch impregnable fortreſſes, in which not only morality, but religion herſelf, in all her purity, ſeemed to promiſe their preſervation, have mouldered into duſt? It is poſſible, I fear, that your favourite, ſerious Ramblers, like many admirable ſermons of paſt times, may, in a few centuries, be utterly forgotten.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Surely not; for although it is certain thoſe excellent papers have all the ſerious purity of a ſermon, yet they have alſo very different attractions. To me, the Ramblers exhibit a mental paradiſe, in which fancy and reaſon alternately entertain me with a ſucceſſion of new delights, under the guidance and patronage of virtue and religion. While I read them, I feel (to uſe the words of their incomparable author) "my "heart rectified, my appetites coun- "teracted, and my paſſions repreſſed."

THE COLONEL.

I moſt readily admit, that the Ramblers, from the evident deſign of the writer, and from their intrinſic merit

in many points of view, have very ſtrong, and I ſincerely hope they may prove ſucceſsful claims to immortality. Yet, as leſſons on life and manners, there are many productions of the ſame claſs, whoſe influence on my heart and mind is not only more pleaſant, but more beneficial. To read the Rambler is, to my feelings, to walk through a ſtupendous Egyptian temple of black marble, furniſhed with ſome Coloſſal ſtatues of ebony, and with here and there a little groteſque image, very lamely copied from ordinary life. I perceive, at every ſtep, a ſtrength and grandeur of conception in the dark fancy of the melancholy architect. I perceive, alſo, that in the courſe of his gloomy labour he had ſhort fits of merriment, and that in thoſe ſportive

moments, he was ſingularly awkward and ungraceful. In the whole ſtructure, there is an air of awful majeſty, that always fixes my attention, and frequently enchants me; yet, at the end of my circuit through its various apartments, I feel rather depreſſed and amazed, than animated and improved. Such is the effect which his moſt conſiderable work produces upon me; and that many others have ſurveyed it with ſimilar feelings, we may conclude from what he tells us himſelf in the cloſe of the laſt paper. The book is in your hand; give me leave to read the ſentence:—

" Scarcely any man is ſo ſteadily ſe-
" rious as not to complain, that the
" ſeverity of dictatorial inſtruction has
" been too ſeldom relieved, and that
" he is driven, by the ſternneſs of the
" Rambler's

" Rambler's philoſophy, to more chear-
" ful and airy companions."

THE ARCHDEACON.

I admire the magnanimity of this confeſſion.

THE COLONEL.

You are very generous, my good friend, in allowing that quality to a poor diſcontented author, who tells us, in a fit of honeſt ſpleen, that he thought himſelf too wiſe for his readers.

THE ARCHDEACON.

It is ſurely true, that the ſerious air, and let me ſay the ſublime beauties of that production, were the chief obſtacles to its immediate ſucceſs. Its merit was of too elevated a nature to be in-

ſtantly underſtood by the frivolous multitude:—but it has at length been fairly appreciated by time; and the great moraliſt is now univerſally read, not only for the dignity of his ſentiments, but for the force and luſtre of his language. For my own part, I exult in the growing influence of his genius; I am happy in ſeeing it tend to the full diſcharge of that glorious office, for which every great mind ſhould think itſelf faſhioned by Heaven; I mean, the office of diffuſing the light of knowledge and of virtue over millions of ſpirits inferior to itſelf.

THE COLONEL.

I will not be ſo ungrateful as to ſay, that I catch not any ſuch rays from Johnſon; but if I am frequently enlightened

lightened by his burſts of ſplendid ſentiment, I am ſtill more frequently darkened and depreſſed by his thick vollies of ſpleen. In all his writings, and in the Rambler particularly, he ſeems to me to bear a great reſemblance to his own Suſpirius, the Screech-owl, whom he repreſents, you know, " as ſettled " in an opinion, that the whole buſineſs " of life is to complain, and whoſe " every ſyllable was loaded with miſ- " fortune."—He would, indeed, be the moſt meritorious of all moraliſts, if the merit of a preceptor conſiſted in trying to teach mankind that their exiſtence is miſery. I own myſelf devoted to more enlivening philoſophy; for I could never find that wiſdom and virtue are acquired by catching the contagion of conſtitutional melancholy,

or

or that the heart is made better, in proportion as the imagination is terrified.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Yet a man of your thoughtful turn, my dear Colonel, muſt ſurely allow, that in alluring men to pay a ſerious attention to their duty, a writer takes the firſt and moſt neceſſary ſtep towards making them better. It is not the gloom of melancholy, but the ſolemnity of religion, that gives ſuch a ſerious air to the compoſitions of Johnſon; and, inſtead of blaming the philoſopher, I think you ought rather to applaud the Chriſtian.

THE COLONEL.

I have already ſaid, that your Moraliſt appears to me to have miſtaken the true

ſpirit

ſpirit of Chriſtianity in his manners, and I think ſo no leſs in the tenor of his works, which, without mentioning thoſe that are envious and unjuſt, have a general tendency to inſpire a dreary gloomineſs of ſpirit. A ſoldier perhaps, my dear reverend friend, may have formed very erroneous notions of ſacred things, which he cannot have ſtudied ſufficiently: but to my apprehenſion, the true ſpirit of our religion is more chearful than gloomy; for in what does Chriſtianity ſurpaſs all the religions of the earth? not in its auſterity, not in its terror, but in its benignity, in its comfort. It is chearful, becauſe it excites us to the moſt attentive diſcharge of thoſe tender and ſocial duties which cannot be duly diſcharged without gentleneſs and joy. Other religions may

animate

animate the frame, by flattering ſome particular paſſion; as the Alcoran, for inſtance, undoubtedly flatters the two paſſions of deſire and ambition. But Chriſtianity, in my idea of it, accompliſhes this end by the very oppoſite means: it melts down all the paſſions, and extracts from them the vivifying eſſence of univerſal charity.—Forgive me for thus throwing out the rough conceptions of a laical enthuſiaſt, on ſo intereſting a topic. I am ſure you will forgive me, becauſe I know we think alike, both on the importance and the benignity of our religion.

THE ARCHDEACON.

And let me remind you, my excellent friend, that our ideas agree alſo with thoſe of the great Author, whom you are too

too haſtily condemning. You ſeem to have utterly forgot, that the Rambler contains not only as ſublime, but as chearful a picture of Chriſtianity as the human faculties can exhibit; pray recollect the dream, in which a lovely figure exclaims—" My name is Reli-" gion; I am the offspring of Truth " and Love, and the parent of Benevo-" lence, Hope, and Joy *."

THE COLONEL.

I perfectly recollect the allegory you mean, for I happened to read it

* It is remarkable, that the ſpeaker and his opponent ſeem equally unaware of a conſiderable miſtake in this quotation. The words indeed are in the Rambler; but in number 44, a paper ſupplied by a Lady, who, in copying the energy of Johnſon's language, has embelliſhed his work with the pureſt religious ſentiments.—*Note by the Editor.*

aloud,

aloud, the other day, to my ſiſter; and I remember, on our finiſhing the paper, we both regretted that Religion, when ſhe ſettled herſelf in the mind of Johnſon, ſeemed to have excluded theſe her three children from her houſehold. To religious joy he appears to have been almoſt a ſtranger; he was not favoured with very long or very frequent viſits from religious hope; and that religious benevolence, which we frequently admire, as the immediate director of his pen, was continually overpowered and ſtruck dumb by the ſtronger voices of his more conſtant companions, pride, envy, and ſpleen. I allow you, that few authors have written with a more religious caſt of mind than your Moraliſt; yet ſurely he diſguſts his reader, not by being too much, but too little of a Chriſtian.

Chriſtian. Religion has ſometimes an effect ſimilar to what is imputed to wine; inſtead of giving new diſpoſitions to the mind, it ſtrengthens and calls forth the humour it happens to meet, whether good or bad: thus the natural ferocity of Johnſon is ſeen to mount in a religious blaze, when, in his ramble among the ſacred ruins of Scotland, his imagination delights itſelf in conceiving that a ruinous ſteeple may fall, to cruſh the poſterity of the Scottiſh Reformer. Surely, ſaid a friend of ours, when he firſt ſaw that anecdote of Johnſon, this man wanted only the lot of being born in Spain, when the inquiſition was eſtabliſhed, to have been diſtinguiſhed as the moſt black-minded and bloody ſupporter of that barbarous tribunal.

LADY CAROLINE.

Enough, my dear diſputants, on this point. Pray allow me to give a new turn to your debate; for I foreſee, that if you grow warm on this branch of your argument, one of you will make him a ſaint, and the other a fiend; though it is very evident to our cool apprehenſion, that he was neither, but, as moſt of you lordly creatures might be found, perhaps, in ſuch mental diſſection, a very ſtrange compound of both.

THE COLONEL.

Very well, my dear Lady. So you think the ſons of Eve, like the male heirs, who ſeize the whole eſtate in our modern families, have taken from their

ſiſters

ſiſters all the ample inheritance of imperfection. Give me your hand, my poor ſiſter! for if any ſon of Eve can be truly ſaid to have done ſo, I am the man.

THE ARCHDEACON.

So you are, my friend, as far as the Lady is concerned: and let me add, that you reſemble the modern heir in another particular; you have ſo contrived to get rid of this ſame ample inheritance, that we cannot even gueſs the amount of it.

LADY CAROLINE.

I thank you doubly, my good friend, for anſwering one compliment for me, and at the ſame time favouring me with another.—But come, we are idly

rambling from our ſubject. You have ſtill to conſider Johnſon both as a Poet and a Critic.

THE COLONEL.

In the firſt character he may be ſoon diſpatched. We have only to ſay, what I think unqueſtionable, that he was inferior to the whole body of Engliſh poets whom he has ſo ferociouſly anatomized.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I aſk your pardon. There is nothing finer in our language than his imitation of Juvenal, and his various prologues, particularly the very fine prologue that delineates the progreſs of the drama.

THE

THE COLONEL.

Surely there is ſome degree of courteſy in allowing his name to ſtand on the liſt of poets, for having written the moſt frigid and unintereſting tragedy that can be ſelected from all the languages of the earth; and a forcible imitation of a declamatory Satiriſt. He thought himſelf indeed a great poet; and tried to bully the public into the ſame opinion, by the cloſe of the arrogant prologue to his Irene:

" *In reaſon, nature, truth he dares to truſt,*
" *Ye fops be ſilent, and ye wits be juſt.*"

This would have been bold language for any writer to have uſed, in ſpeaking of his moſt fortunate production; but what is it, when applied to a perform-

ance which, inſtead of being inſpired by his boaſted patrons, Reaſon, Nature, and Truth, appeared to be rather the work of falſe, unfeeling art, and of pompous abſurdity?—His critical bitterneſs may be partly aſcribed to his great dramatic diſappointment. Having utterly failed in his prime ambition to diſtinguiſh himſelf, and make his fortune as a poet, he conceived an eternal hatred to the whole tribe of poets; and, unluckily for that tribe, his powers of defaming poetical merit were as ſtrong as his power to equal it was feeble. And hence, as I lately heard, a cenſurer of his criticiſm altered a title-page to his Lives of the Poets, and called them, "The "Lives of the triumphant Angels, "written by Lucifer the fallen." Indeed,

deed, he ſeems to have dipt his pen, not only in gall, but

" *In ever-burning ſulphur unconſum'd.*"

In all his compoſitions, and even in his recorded converſation, when he is moſt virulent and ferocious, there is ſtill ſuch vigour of intellect in what he ſays, that, I muſt own, he hardly ever appears

Leſs than Arch-angel ruin'd.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I am glad you allow him ſome dignity as a writer, however diabolical.—But, my good friend, are you not aware of the extreme inconſiſtency in your deſcription? You repreſent him as a moſt ſtriking example both of feebleneſs and

vigour. In one point you muſt be miſtaken; for it is impoſſible that the ſame being can be both a giant and a dwarf.

THE COLONEL.

Pardon me!—that impoſſibility was realized in Johnſon. He was a giant in ſome faculties, and a dwarf in others.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Yet ſurely not a dwarf in that faculty, which is ſaid to conſtitute a poet—I mean, imagination.—One of his friends has told us, you know, and I think very truly, "His mind was ſo "full of imagery, that he might have "been perpetually a poet."

THE

THE COLONEL.

We find he made the experiment, and could never be ſo completely.—His lateſt biographer, indeed, ſeems aware of his poetical and his critical failure, and appears to apologize for both, by ſuppoſing, that he is " to be " numbered among thoſe poets, in whom " the powers of underſtanding, more " than thoſe of the imagination, are " ſeen to exiſt."—But ſuch a ſuppoſition affords us no very favourable or juſt eſtimate of the talents that really belonged to this wonderful being; for even the enemies of Johnſon muſt allow, that a very vigorous, and a very quick imagination, was one of his moſt ſtriking characteriſtics. The truth, I believe, is, however paradoxical it may ſound, that a writer may poſſeſs the

faculty of imagination in a high degree, and yet prove himſelf a miſerable poet. Let any one try to read the Irene of Johnſon, and he will be perfectly convinced of this truth. There are fine images, elevated ſentiments, and ſplendid language; yet the performance produces only languor and diſguſt, becauſe the author was utterly deſtitute of that ſenſibility, which alone can enable a writer to awaken intereſt and pathos. A poet, who has not the ſmalleſt degree of dominion over the paſſions, is as poor and impotent a being, as a king without ſubjects.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Such an author may fail in the drama, and yet excel in other branches of poetry.

THE

THE COLONEL.

I do not believe there is an inſtance of any great poet upon record, who was unable, on every occaſion, to aſſume the eaſy air of nature, and to ſpeak the language of the heart. Such inability, I think, attended Johnſon, both in verſe and proſe. Yet, with all that deficiency, I feel he had faculties which juſtly make him an object of admiration. He had a depth, an expanſion, a majeſty of intellect;—he had an imagination that could preſent either grand or groteſque images to the mind, with infinite clearneſs and force;—he could lead or bewilder the judgment by ſtrength of argument, or by logical ſubtlety, he could amuſe the fancy by ſuch pageants as ſhe is fond of

ſurveying:

ſurveying:—but I queſtion, if any poet or eſſayiſt ever exiſted, with leſs power of exciting either tears or laughter. With a total inability to catch or ſupport the proper tone of any aſſumed character, he appears to me, among writers, very like what a deformed giant would be in a company of players; who might, indeed, appear on the ſtage in the parts of Hamlet or Benedick, but would certainly not charm you with any dramatic illuſion, while you diſcovered, under his theatrical diſguiſe, the high-ſhouldered Goliah. An effect of this defective kind (to uſe the quibble of Polonius) ſtrikes me perpetually in Raſſelas. I hardly ever hear a ſentence uttered by the Princeſs, or the Lady Pekuah, but I ſee the enormous Johnſon in petticoats.

THE

THE ARCHDEACON.

Had Raſſelas been the production of a Frenchman, his country would have called it a noble poem.—And ſurely, diſtinguiſhed as it is by livelineſs of deſcription, by dignity of ſentiment, by elevation and purity of language, we ought to eſteem it as the work of a poetical imagination.

THE COLONEL.

I have already declared my opinion, that the imagination of Johnſon was of the higheſt claſs. It was, indeed, a diamond; but, like the rarity that I lately read an account of in that excellent phyſician and philoſopher, Dr. Lewis, it was a black diamond, and malevolent melancholy was the *foulneſs* of

of the jewel, to uſe the expreſſion of the naturaliſt, on which *its black hue depended* *. You may tell me, that we ought to treat this melancholy with tenderneſs, becauſe it was an hereditary misfortune; in that point of view, every perſon of common humanity muſt be inclined to pardon and to pity its effects. But let not the quality, which was an infirmity in the man, be eſteemed as a perfection in his works. His Raſſelas, like the greater part of his other compoſition, leaves a heavy and uncomfortable gloom upon the mind. You will tell me, perhaps, that the author wiſhed to produce a very ſerious effect, and that it conſtitutes a part of

* See Lewis's Philoſophical Commerce of Arts, p. 637.

his

his ſuperlative moral merit, to have converted that idle or miſchievous thing, called a romance, into a ſalutary book. —It may be ſo.—I can, indeed, conceive, that the old proverb concerning meat and poiſon, may be as true concerning books, our intellectual food, as it certainly is in regard to our ordinary diet. There may be minds to whom the pompous and dark fictions of your Moraliſt are both ſalutary and pleaſant. To me, they are neither; for, inſtead of quickening my virtues, they only communicate their own gloomineſs to my ſpirits.—His imagination appears to me to reſemble the Chineſe bird, celebrated in that literary curioſity, "The Praiſe of Monkden, by "his poetical majeſty of China." The bird is called Yuen. Its melancholy

cry,

cry, for it has no ſong, is ſaid to awaken the whirlwind; and it flies only in the darkneſs of a tempeſtuous night.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Severely as you have treated Johnſon, both as a poet and a noveliſt, there is yet one character in which you muſt allow him to ſtand ſuperior to every antagoniſt. He was not, indeed, the greateſt poet, or the moſt intereſting noveliſt, that ever wrote; but, as a critic, he has no equal. His Lives of the Poets, though not free from little defects, and inclining, perhaps, to an exceſs of ſeverity in a few articles, yet contain a maſs of criticiſm, ſuperior, perhaps, to all the united critical labours of the ancient and modern world. Different objections may be made to

different

different parts; but all voices conſpire in celebrating the whole, as the rich production of the moſt profound and acute underſtanding, that was ever employed in the illuſtration of any ſingle art.

THE COLONEL.

If barbarity can entitle a judge to preſide over his brethren, you are undoubtedly right in conſidering Johnſon as the prince of critics. His criticiſm has, to my apprehenſion, all the excellencies, and all the failings, of his other compoſition. It has all the powers that the head can give; it has none of the charms that the heart only can ſupply. If you examine his deciſions on all our poets, you will find, that he ingeniouſly mingles as much malignity

with his juſtice, as the nature of his office would allow him to exert.

THE ARCHDEACON.

This ſurely is a miſtake. You are angry with him for his ſarcaſtic ſeverity to a few of your favourites, and therefore too haſtily accuſe him of malevolence and injuſtice towards the whole fraternity of poets—but, if his cenſure is now and then acrimonious, his praiſe in general is candid, generous, and magnificent.—The Lives, taken altogether, ſtrike me as the moſt radiant crown of glory, that poetic genius ever received from critical admiration.

THE COLONEL.

I believe I can point out to you ſome very dark flaws in the brilliants

you

you admire. But firſt anſwer me one queſtion; Shall you not think the malevolence, and I might add the abſurdity, of the critic ſufficiently proved, if, in his characters of many poets, I ſhew you paſſages where the cenſure is not only too vehement, but infinitely more applicable to his own writings, than to the poet whom he is cenſuring.

THE ARCHDEACON.

This, I confeſs, would abate my reverence for his judgment. But I am perſuaded, you would not find it poſſible to collect ſuch evidence as you deſcribe.

THE COLONEL.

As it happens, I have it ready to produce; for, being curious to convince

myſelf how far his malignity to our poets extended, I amuſed myſelf, the other day, in ſelecting ſuch paſſages as appeared to confirm my idea. Here they are—let me read them to you in order; and I think you will agree with me, that they exhibit rather a ſtrong reſemblance of Johnſon himſelf, than a fair delineation of the unfavourable features in our great Engliſh bards.—I begin with a paſſage from his character of Shakeſpeare.

"In tragedy, his performance ſeems "conſtantly to be worſe, as his labour "is more. Whenever he ſolicits his in-"vention, or ſtrains his faculties, the "offspring of his throes is tumour, "meanneſs, tedioufneſs, and obſcurity.

"In narration, he affects a diſpropor-"tionate

" tionate pomp of diction, and a weari-
" ſome train of circumlocution, and tells
" the incident imperfectly in many
" words, which might have been more
" plainly delivered in few.—Not that
" always, where the language is in-
" tricate, the thought is ſubtile; or the
" image always great, where the line
" is bulky: the equality of words to
" things is very often neglected; and
" trivial ſentiments and vulgar ideas
" diſappoint the attention, to which they
" are recommended by ſonorous epi-
" thets and ſwelling figures.

" He no ſooner begins to move, than
" he counteracts himſelf; and terror
" and pity, as they are riſing in the mind,
" are checked and blaſted by ſudden
" frigidity *."

* Preface to Shakeſpeare.

Well, my good friend, is not all this a thouſand times more applicable to Johnſon himſelf, than to Shakeſpeare?

THE ARCHDEACON.

I muſt confeſs, it appears ſo; but in the Lives of the Poets, you can hardly have found any words ſo treacherouſly fitted to your purpoſe, or contrive to make them recoil ſo cruelly on their author.

THE COLONEL.

You ſhall hear:—and, that I may not tire you, I will omit many of the ſentences in my liſt.—But what ſay you to the following?

"The compoſitions are ſuch as "might have been written for pen-"nance by a hermit, or for hire by a "philoſophical

"philoſophical rhymer, who had only "heard of another ſex *."—This indeed is partly true of Cowley's amorous poetry, yet it ſtrikes me as more exactly deſcriptive of Johnſon's various attempts to delineate female characters.

The malignity of your Critic towards Milton, fell rather on the man than the poet—and for this, you know, he has been very juſtly chaſtiſed. There is a ſanctity in the poetical character of Milton, which ſecured it againſt any groſs violation, from a perſon who piqued himſelf on his piety; yet in his account of this religious bard, your Moraliſt has contrived to inſert a few malevolent remarks, infinitely more applicable to himſelf as an author, than to the ſub-

* Life of Cowley.

lime and tender poet whom he deteſted. —Let me read you my evidence.

" Milton never learned the art of do-
" ing little things with grace; he over-
" looked the milder excellence of ſua-
" vity and ſoftneſs; he was a lion that
" had no ſkill in dandling the kid.

" We read Milton for inſtruction; re-
" tire harraſſed and overburthened, and
" look elſewhere for recreation."

How egregiouſly falſe are theſe words, as ſaid of the poet! how completely true when applied to Johnſon himſelf! —The milder half of Milton's merit, this great critic had no feelings to perceive. He could juſtly eſtimate the vigour of his imagination, but he could not diſcover the tenderneſs of his heart, which is exquiſitely diſplayed in the cha-

racter

racter of Eve.—How perfectly has our divine poet caught the true tone of female nature, in those simple, beautiful, and pathetic lines, with which our lovely parent closes a speech in the 9th book!

Adam shall share with me in bliss or woe;
So dear I love him, that with him all deaths
I could endure, without him live no life.

How unfeeling must be the critic, who could represent the author of such verses, as utterly deficient *in suavity and softness!*

THE ARCHDEACON.

His hatred and injustice to Milton, which arose from his political sentiments, has, you know, been confessed and lamented by his friends.—As a coun-

terpoiſe to this defect, let me remind you of the noble juſtice which he has done to Dryden.—His account of this extraordinary poet, to whom Pope has ſo juſtly and ſo pathetically applied the epithet *unhappy*, is executed, as the painters ſay, *con amore*, and ſtrikes me as the maſter-piece of our critical biographer.

THE COLONEL.

It is eaſy to account for this pre-eminence; for in his whole liſt of poets, there is no individual to whom the biographer bore ſo great a reſemblance, in the general caſt of his mind, in his political, and, I believe, in his religious notions.—From ſome of Dryden's failings, indeed, the critic was happily free, and to ſome of his talents he has no preten-

ſion; but that they reſembled each other not a little in their mental features, you will clearly diſcover, by obſerving how exactly the following paſſages, from his forcible and juſt character of Dryden, are deſcriptive of himſelf.

"The power that predominated in "his intellectual operations, was rather "ſtrong reaſon than quick ſenſibility. "Upon all occaſions that were preſent-"ed, he ſtudied rather than felt; and pro-"duced ſentiments, not ſuch as nature "enforces, but meditation ſupplies. He "had ſo little ſenſibility of the power "of effuſions purely natural, that he "did not eſteem them in others. Sim-"plicity gave him no pleaſure—he "could more eaſily fill the ear with "ſome ſplendid novelty, than awaken

"thoſe

" thoſe ideas that ſlumber in the
" heart *".

THE ARCHDEACON.

Theſe paſſages are indeed applicable to Johnſon, and ſo doubtleſs are many ſentences of praiſe, that we might diſcover in his Biography: one honourable metaphor, at leaſt, let us apply to him, out of the life from which you are quoting, and alluding to the cloſe of his admirable eulogy on Dryden: " Let us ſay of him, that he found the Engliſh language a confuſed heap of looſe ſtones, and that he left them raiſed by his ſingle labour into a noble edifice, which amazes us by its magnificence, and delights us by its utility."

* Life of Dryden.

LADY CAROLINE.

I thank you, my good friend, for throwing in a little juſt commendation to temper the Colonel's ſeverity.—He ſeems, I think, to be engaged in a cruel kind of a proceſs; it is like the forcing a poor ſoldier to ſtand before the mouth of his own great gun, and reluctantly blow himſelf to pieces.

THE COLONEL.

By no means. If an engineer, in levelling a cannon againſt thoſe whom he ought to have ſpared, manages it ſo ill as to hurt only himſelf by its recoil, the fault is doubly his own; and, however maimed he may be, he cannot be much entitled to compaſſion.—Now I think Johnſon exactly in this predicament;

ment; and, when you hear the following extracts, I truſt you will agree with me. For brevity's ſake, I will confine myſelf to the lives of Prior, Hammond, Collins, and Gray, omitting ſeveral ſentences in my collection.

To make you an immediate convert, my dear Lady, to the juſtice of my procedure, I ſhall begin with the character of your beloved Henry and Emma— "A dull and tedious dialogue, which "excites neither eſteem for the man nor "tenderneſs for the woman."—Every heart murmurs at the injuſtice of theſe words, thus pointed againſt Prior:—but obſerve with what propriety we might write them, dropping only two particles, on the title-page of Irene, and call that Tragical Homily, "dull and te-"dious dialogue, which excites neither

"eſteem

" eſteem for man nor tenderneſs for wo-
" man."

But hear the fuller eſtimate of Prior's talents.

" As laws operate in civil agency,
" not to the excitement of virtue, but
" the repreſſion of wickedneſs, ſo judg-
" ment, in the operations of intellect,
" can hinder faults, but not produce
" excellence.—Whatever Prior obtains
" above mediocrity, ſeems the effort of
" ſtruggle and of toil; he has many vi-
" gorous, but few happy lines; he has
" every thing by purchaſe, and nothing
" by gift; he had no nightly viſitations
" of the Muſe, no infuſions of ſenti-
" ment or felicities of fancy.

" His expreſſion has every mark of la-
" borious ſtudy; the line ſeldom ſeems
" to have been formed at once; the

" words

" words did not come till they were
" called, and were then put by con-
" ſtraint into their places, where they do
" their duty, but do it ſullenly.—In
" his greater compoſitions, there may
" be found more rigid ſtatelineſs, than
" graceful dignity. His numbers are
" ſuch as mere diligence may attain;
" they ſeldom offend the ear, and ſeldom
" ſooth it; they commonly want airi-
" neſs, lightneſs, and facility; what is
" ſmooth is not ſoft. His verſes always
" roll, but they ſeldom flow *."

There's a curious portrait for you! If we knew not the painter, might we not ſuppoſe that it was rather drawn for the ſtiff and pompous Johnſon himſelf, than for the eaſy, elegant, and ſportive Prior?

* Prior's life.

As

As to Hammond, Johnſon ſeems to have criticiſed him with the utmoſt rancour, becauſe he had been juſtly praiſed by Cheſterfield; whom the ſplenetic ſavage ſeizes this opportunity to calumniate, by repreſenting him as commending the Elegies of his departed friend, without having read them;—a charge not only abſurd in itſelf, but inconſiſtent with the idea which this rancorous critic entertained of the noble editor's vanity; ſince the Earl is elegantly and juſtly complimented, in the very poems which he is ſuppoſed to have praiſed without knowing their contents.—I ſhall hope to convince you, in the courſe of our conference, that Cheſterfield was as good a judge of nature, in poetry, as Johnſon; and that he had the talent of repreſenting it more faithfully, as an eſſayiſt,

than

than your great Moraliſt himſelf.—But let me now read the cenſure on Hammond.

"Theſe Elegies have neither paſ-
"ſion, nature, nor manners."—Again,
"Hammond has few ſentiments drawn
"from nature, and few images from
"modern life. He produces nothing
"but frigid pedantry *."

Do you not admire this charge of pedantry, againſt a poet remarkable for the eaſy elegance of his language, from another, who talks himſelf of *Arthritic Tyranny*, in an ode to the Spring?

But to ſhew you the difference between Hammond and Johnſon, as poets,

* Life of Hammond.

let

let me read you theſe two ſhort extracts from each.

What joy to hear the tempeſt howl in vain,
And claſp a fearful miſtreſs to my breaſt;
Or, lull'd to ſlumber by the beating rain,
Secure and happy, ſink at laſt to reſt!

What joy to wind along the cool retreat,
To ſtop and gaze on Delia as I go,
To mingle ſweet diſcourſe with kiſſes ſweet,
And teach my lovely ſcholar all I know!

Every man who has loved, muſt perceive, that in theſe verſes, though I have injured them by placing them together, the paſſion of love is expreſſed with delicacy, ſpirit, and truth. Now hear how Johnſon cloſes one of thoſe curious compoſitions that he calls Odes.

Haſte! preſs the cluſters, fill the bowl;
Apollo, ſhoot thy parting ray;
This gives the ſunſhine of the ſoul,
This God of Health, and Verſe, and Day.

Still, ſtill the jocund ſtrain ſhall flow,
The pulſe with vigorous rapture beat,
My Stella with new charms ſhall glow,
And every bliſs in wine ſhall meet *.

To ſay *Preſs the cluſters*, is an odd mode of calling for wine.—But I quote the paſſage, to ſhew the tenderneſs of the poet to his Stella. Put the ſentiment into plain proſe, and it runs thus; —Come! let us get half drunk, my dear Stella, and I ſhall *then think you beautiful* and *myſelf happy*.

* Johnſon's Autumn, an Ode.

LADY

LADY CAROLINE.

This is playing the barbarous critical tyrant, indeed! You out-Herod Herod!—But pray proceed to your extract from the Life of Collins, which I do not perfectly recollect. I only remember, that the critic mentions his personal intimacy with the poet; and I should therefore imagine, he must speak of his interesting compositions with an affectionate enthusiasm, sufficient to defeat your hostile purpose of turning the heavy fire of his critical battery against himself.

THE COLONEL.

Oh! your great Critic had too elevated and too stately a mind, to be touched by the partialities of friendship! Hear

how he closes a character of the poet, written when we might suppose his tenderness to be quickened by the recent death of his friend.—" This idea which " he had formed of excellence, led him " to oriental fictions and allegorical " imagery; and perhaps, while he was " intent upon description, he did not " sufficiently cultivate sentiment. His " poems are the productions of a mind " not deficient in fire, nor unfurnished " with knowledge either of books or " life, but somewhat obstructed in its " progress, by deviation in quest of " mistaken beauties *."—No one, I believe, can think the Critic spoke too kindly of Collins in this early character;—yet, as if his judgment had been warp-

* Life of Collins.

ed

ed by affection, in the ſubſequent life, which was not written, you know, till an interval of many years had allowed time enough for his *extreme* tenderneſs to evaporate, he added the following cenſure on the language of his poetical friend.—" His diction was often harſh, " unſkilfully laboured, and injudiciouſly " ſelected. He affected the obſolete, " when it was not worthy of revival; " and he puts his words out of the com- " mon order, ſeeming to think, with " ſome later candidates for fame, that " not to write proſe, is certainly to write " poetry. His lines commonly are of " ſlow motion, clogged and impeded " with cluſters of conſonants. As men " are often eſteemed, who cannot be " loved; ſo the poetry of Collins may

" ſometimes extort praiſe, when it gives
" little pleaſure*."

Now, to my apprehenſion, every ſyllable, in both theſe Extracts, is infinitely more ſuited to Johnſon, than to his injured friend; the greater part of whoſe poetry, as Langhorne has juſtly ſaid of his ode on the death of Colonel Roſs, *is replete with harmony, ſpirit, and pathos.* —But I haſten to the laſt article on my liſt—the inſulted Gray. You are both of you ſo well acquainted with the Critic's extreme iniquity towards this enchanting bard, that I will only read a ſingle ſhort paſſage from thoſe I have ſelected.

" The images are magnified by affec-
" tation; the language is laboured into
" harſhneſs. The mind of the writer

* Life of Collins.

" ſeems

" ſeems to work with unnatural vio-
" lence, *double double toil and trouble.*
" He has a kind of ſtrutting dignity;
" and is tall by walking on tiptoe. His
" art and his ſtruggle are too viſible;
" and there is too little appearance of
" eaſe or nature *.

Tell me, I beſeech you, to whoſe writings may we moſt properly apply this exaggerated deſcription? to thoſe of Gray, or of Johnſon? To me it appears to hit the tumid Rambler himſelf, ſo forcibly, that if any man were to attempt a ſmall, but ſtrong caricatura of Johnſon as an author, I queſtion if he could produce one with ſo ſtriking a reſemblance as this very paragraph exhibits.

* Life of Gray.

And now, my good friend, ingenuoufly fay, have I not convinced you, that Johnfon, in paffing fentence on our great poets, inftead of fairly repreffenting their petty failings, has frequently delineated his own heavier defects, and afcribed them to fpirits of a higher clafs, to whom they could not belong?

THE ARCHDEACON.

You have (I muft own) convinced me, that he was frequently unjuft; but I am ftill inclined to impute that injuftice, rather to the keennefs and ftrength, than to the malignity of his mind. I am perfuaded he always fpoke as he felt; but he felt blemifhes too forcibly, from the rigid integrity of his acute underftanding. Whenever he blames, I believe you may difcover

fome

ſome little foundation for his cenſure; but he builds, perhaps, too large a ſtructure on too trifling a baſis. I cannot better explain to you my idea on this point, than by applying to him a lively couplet of Dr. Young:

His judgment juſt, his ſentence over ſtrong;
Becauſe he's right, he's ever in the wrong.

THE COLONEL.

Very well! — if you acknowledge him to be in the wrong, I will allow you to eſtimate, as you pleaſe, the moral rectitude of his perceptions. My own idea of him, as a critic, is this:—His ill-nature, or, if you wiſh for a ſofter expreſſion, his ſpleen, had, I think, a microſcopic eye, which, whenever it happened to glance on a

freckle in the face of any luckleſs muſe, immediately made it a cancer.

THE ARCHDEACON.

If, as a critic, he was too ſevere, his ſeverity may ſtill produce a very uſeful effect on the trifling vagrants of Parnaſſus, by exciting them to think with more energy. And, let me add, he has one critical merit, which deſerves the higheſt commendation; I mean, the merit of having reſcued the dramatic muſe from thoſe oppreſſive and three-fold fetters, *The Unities*.

The demolition of a perplexing poetical ſuperſtition, which had been ſanctified by the reverence of ages, was the work of a noble underſtanding, very worthily employed, and a work that

ought to endear his name to every lover of the ſtage.

THE COLONEL.

I heartily join with you in this applauſe, though, in general, I have little veneration for your Philoſopher in his critical capacity. It is Sir Henry Wotton, I think, who has called critics the bruſhers of noblemen's clothes; and, if his metaphor is juſt, we may ſay that Johnſon, like a heavy-handed valet, has executed this office with ſuch vehemence, as fretted to pieces the fine raiment of his maſters.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Indeed, you are too ſevere!—But how great ſoever you may repreſent the miſtakes of Johnſon, in points that belong ſolely

ſolely to taſte and ſentiment (on which, perhaps, we could hardly find any two minds in perfect uniſon) the great and ſolid portion of his merit muſt ſtill remain entire. He ſtrikes me like a venerable oak, which, though it may diſcover a few blighted leaves, and a little dead wood, perhaps, in the extremity of its branches, has a noble, ſound trunk, of the moſt valuable texture. The world, ſurely, owes no little reſpect to a writer, who not only laboured for many years, with great ſincerity and fervour, to improve their morals, but exerted his rare faculties for that purpoſe with ſuch conſtant rectitude of mind, with ſuch uncommon chaſtity of thought and expreſſion, that I queſtion if his numerous works contain a ſingle word or alluſion, which the

the moſt modeſt female would bluſh to read in the preſence of a parent or a lover.

THE COLONEL.

Then you muſt think our fair preſident here a very ſqueamiſh lady, my good friend; for ſhe told us, you know, that ſhe was often diſguſted both by Cheſterfield and Johnſon.

THE ARCHDEACON.

You are a very treacherous antagoniſt, in attempting to injure me ſo barbarouſly in the opinion of our judge. —But the equity of Lady Caroline is not to be corrupted or miſled. She will clearly perceive that you draw a very unwarrantable inference from what I advanced Indelicacy is not the only

offence

offence in a writer by which a lady can be diſguſted. As far as Lord Cheſterfield is concerned, I can, indeed, believe that this offence was alluded to; for your dainty refiner of our manners abounds, I think, in ſuch indelicate images, as are moſt likely to diſguſt a mind ſo pure as that in queſtion. But whenever Lady Caroline was diſguſted by Johnſon, it was, I am convinced, by a defect very different from indelicacy, yet a defect of which ſhe is equally qualified to judge—I mean, his critical injuſtice.

THE COLONEL.

She is not ſufficiently honeſt, or, I ſhould rather ſay, ſhe is too delicate herſelf to confeſs, and demonſtrate to you, the contrary; but I will, on this occaſion,

occaſion, be her interpreter. — There is, undoubtedly, a great degree of ſuch purity as you have juſtly praiſed in the writings of Johnſon; yet, immaculate as you think him, I can ſhew you a ſentence in his biography, which is, perhaps, both the moſt cruel and the moſt indecent ſentence that ever fell from the pen of a ſerious writer; and I am perſuaded this very paſſage was in my ſiſter's thoughts, when ſhe made uſe of the word *diſguſted*.

THE ARCHDEACON.

You have awakened my curioſity. Pray indulge me with an explanation of what you allude to, for I cannot even gueſs at the paſſage.

THE

THE COLONEL.

Here it is, in the volume that lies open before us.—It relates to the unfortunate lady ſo pathetically lamented by Pope—you remember her hiſtory; I will only read the biographer's obſervation upon it.

" From this account, given with " evident intention to raiſe the lady's " character, it does not appear that " ſhe had any claim to praiſe, nor " much to compaſſion. She ſeems to " have been impatient, violent, and " ungovernable: her uncle's power " could not have laſted long; the " hour of liberty and choice would " have come in time. But her deſires " were too hot for delay; and ſhe

" liked

" liked ſelf-murder better than ſuſ-
" penſe."

What ſay you, my good friend, to the cloſe of this paragraph?—I doubt if the pen of Aretine himſelf ever delineated the rage of incontinence with groſſer or more diſguſting energy.—There is a ſavage barbarity, to my feelings, in this paſſage, that I want words to expreſs. It brings to my fancy the image of a cannibal, who, in finding the corſe of an unhappy, ſelf-ſlaughtered girl, inſtead of breathing over it a natural ſigh of compaſſion, tears the haplefs body to pieces, with a ferocious, ſarcaſtic inſult on the poor unfortunate being, who, in a fit of diſtraction, had made herſelf his prey. Your great Moraliſt is the more in-

excuſable in this caſe, becauſe the unfortunate Lady, inſtead of being ſo outrageouſly eager to gratify her deſires, appears, I think, to have been a tender penitent, not immured in a convent by the tyranny of a relation, but a voluntary recluſe, who wiſhed perhaps, but found herſelf unable, to atone for paſt frailties by a long perſeverance in ſolitude and prayer.

THE ARCHDEACON.

The late accounts that we have all read of this unfortunate Lady, are very far from agreeing with your deſcription.

THE COLONEL.

I know it; but I put no truſt in the petty tales, which are ſo confidently recorded

corded by the chroniclers of every idle hearſay. I cannot, indeed, perfectly vouch for the truth of my deſcription, but I can ſhew you it has the colouring of probability. You may recollect, Pope himſelf tells us, in a note to his pathetic elegy, that the Lady was the ſame perſon to whom the Duke of Buckingham had addreſſed a copy of verſes on her deſign of retiring into a monaſtery. I will endeavour to repeat to you a few lines of the Duke's poetry, and, luckily for his Grace's poetical credit, and my recollection, the lines I am trying to remember are the beſt in the poem.—O! I have juſt recovered enough for my argument.—The Duke deſcribes a tender, enchanting miſtreſs on the point of tearing herſelf from the arms of her

happy lover, in a ſudden guſt of devotion, and proceeds thus;

" *And after all our vows, our ſighs, our*
" *tears,*
" *My baniſh'd ſorrows and your conquer'd*
" *fears,*
" *So many doubts ſo many dangers paſt,*
" *Viſions of zeal muſt vanquiſh me at laſt.*"

Such are the grounds on which I repreſented this haplefs fair as a diſtracted penitent, inſtead of an outrageous wanton; and if you conſider the force of the paſſionate verſes I have quoted, you will ſurely allow, that my conjecture is more ſpecious, at leaſt, than the improbable ſtory, that ſhe was in love with Pope. At all events, the Biographer has

has treated her barbarouſly.—I have heard, that he was intreated to cancel the paſſage, while the proof ſheets were before him, on account of its indecency and its injuſtice; but that he perſiſted in his ſavage reſolve to ſtigmatize the unfortunate Lady, that he might not loſe an opportunity of ſhewing how truly he abhorred the crime of ſuicide; to the verge of which, his own melancholy, I believe, had often conducted him.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I thank you heartily for this anecdote. I never heard any thing in my life, I never read any thing of this nervous this ſublime author, that impreſſed me with ſo forcible ſo grand an idea of his magnanimous morality! I now ſee Johnſon in all his glory, determined to

exert his rare faculties for the real good of his fellow-creatures, with a noble a divine indifference to their applauſe and their abuſe!

THE COLONEL.

What! can you burſt into a rapturous panegyric on his brutality?

THE ARCHDEACON.

Brutality! my good friend? Let us give a juſter name to qualities that do honour to mankind. I grant you every thing you can wiſh, as to the ſevere and groſs appearance of the paſſage you condemn. I will allow you, it is a ſentence at which the cheek of a truly virtuous woman may turn crimſon, not only from wounded modeſty, but from an honeſt womanly indignation, in beholding ſo hideous

hideous a caricatura of female tenderneſs. But all theſe tremendous objections againſt it, tend only to encreaſe my reverence for the writer; and why? becauſe I clearly perceive all the generous ideas that led him to write and to perſevere in maintaining the paſſage. —Let us only examine the thoughts that muſt have paſſed in his mind on that occaſion. He muſt have thought in this manner: "I have written a ſentence, that is ſaid to violate the elaborate purity of my moral compoſitions, a ſentence over which envy and malevolence will exult, and at which decency herſelf may be diſguſted;—but I know by what inſidious ſteps the demon of melancholy may lead a poor idle girl, whoſe affections perhaps are wiſely thwarted, to the

precipice of ſuicide. — If her piety will not ſave her, yet her pride may be rendered the inſtrument of her preſervation.—I may reſemble the ancient legiſlators, who, to ſtop the contagious paſſion for this crime among the women of their city, expoſed the naked body of the ſelf-murdered female. The ſentence objected to, may check ſome unhappy woman on the verge of ſuicide, by ſhewing her how groſs an interpretation the crime ſhe meditates may receive.—Let the delicacy of millions be offended, if I can ſave but the life of one:—What are cenſure and applauſe to a writer, when put in the ſcale againſt ſuch a poſſibility?—my heart tells me, they are duſt in the balance."

So he reaſoned, ſo he acted; and we

ought to revere the heroical benevolence and dignity of his decision.

THE COLONEL.

Nobly argued, my good friend! —I read in the countenance of the Lady, that in this article you have made converts of us both.——But I am astonished to find, by the progress of the sun, how our morning has slipt away—it grieves me to break up the conference, but I have some necessary letters to dispatch by the post of to-day.

LADY CAROLINE.

What! are you really going, brother? and do you mean to abandon the defence of your favourite Chesterfield?

THE

THE ARCHDEACON.

Madam, the Colonel is aware, that on many occaſions, and I believe in the preſent, a maſterly retreat may be more honourable than a victory.

THE COLONEL.

"Do not ſay ſo—you ſhall not find "it ſo."

LADY CAROLINE.

Well, then, let me make one requeſt to you both—that we may not ſay a ſyllable more, either on Cheſterfield or Johnſon, till we are quietly ſettled again in this room to-morrow.

THE

THE COLONEL.

I am much obliged to you for the idea; for in truth I ſhould appear a miſerable advocate for the accompliſhed Earl, whoſe memory I am to vindicate, if I had not a little time allowed me, to bring his cruelly mangled character to your compaſſionate contemplation.—This, I truſt, I ſhall be able to do tomorrow.

Then will I ſpeak right on—
I'll tell you that which you yourſelves do know,
Shew you ſweet Stanhope's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths!
And bid them ſpeak for me: but were I Brutus,

And

And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue
In every wound of Stanhope, that should move
The books around us here to rise and speak.

DIALOGUE

DIALOGUE II.

LADY CAROLINE.

WELL! my dear advocate for the noble delinquent, whom we are bringing to the bar, I may presume you are fully prepared to answer the heavy charges against him, since you seem to have got a collection of memorandums, as copious as a lawyer's brief.

THE COLONEL.

Pray do not discountenance, by your cruel raillery, a poor unpractised pleader, whose apparatus is only in proportion

tion to his want of talents and experience.

LADY CAROLINE.

I am glad to find that you enter with ſo much modeſty on an office ſo daring as the defence of licentiouſneſs; for the good Archdeacon and I have been in ſome fear, leſt your quick imagination ſhould inflame itſelf into a dangerous partiality to a character that your judgment cannot eſteem.—He juſtly obſerves, that too warm an apology for vice, may imperceptibly injure an honeſt mind, by diminiſhing its due reverence for virtue; and he has juſt pointed out to me an excellent paragraph, in his favourite Rambler, which tells us how culpable they are, who have "uſed the "light imparted from heaven, only to "embelliſh

« embellish folly, and shed lustre upon
« crimes."

THE COLONEL.

You are good creatures, to be so kindly solicitous, for the preservation of that little rectitude of mind, which has fallen to my lot! But I trust your generous apprehension will subside, when you recollect the nature of the points that I have undertaken to maintain.—I have by no means engaged to exalt my Lord Chesterfield into a model of moral excellence; but I ventured to say yesterday, what I am now still more inclined, and I flatter myself more able to support—that, with splendid and engaing talents, he had neither more nor worse vices than your pompous Philosopher; and that he is equally entitled

to the kind remembrance of his country. This, I think, is an innocent and juſt aſſertion, that, to every unprejudiced mind, may be rendered as evident as it is, that to govern an unquiet kingdom, as a temporary viceroy, with dignity, and to be uncommonly clear in that great office, requires as much ability, and as much virtue, as are requiſite to write a tumid moral eſſay, or to compile an elaborate treaſury of words.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I might reply to your ſarcaſtic mode of entering on this compariſon, by an alluſion to the compliment paid to Titian, by the Emperor Charles the Vth: I might tell you, that the King can make many Lord Lieutenants, but not a ſingle Johnſon.

THE

THE COLONEL.

I believe the creative influence of regal power could much ſooner make a Johnſon than a Cheſterfield. The command of a prince can, indeed, produce elaborate language, and ambitious morality; but genuine wit, and ſportive urbanity, are ſo far from being *creatible* (if I may create a word) by the will of a monarch, that they very rarely condeſcend to appear in his preſence. Perhaps they never appeared at court to ſo much advantage, as in the character of Cheſterfield. I queſtion if they were ever united to more political integrity; and how happily they may ſometimes accompliſh the irkſome buſineſs of graver argument, we have a pleaſant inſtance, in the anecdote of the noble

Lord's prevailing on the king to fill up a commiſſion with a name, which he had rejected with deteſtation. It was in 1747, when the Earl was Secretary of State. "I had rather have the Devil," ſaid the angry ſovereign, when preſſed to confirm the appointment in queſtion: "With all my heart," ſaid the lively ſecretary, who was waiting ready to fill up the inſtrument for the royal ſignature; "I only beg leave to remind your majeſty, that the commiſſion is indited to our right truſty and right well-beloved couſin." The king, you know, laughed, and complied with the wiſhes of his miniſter.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Your ſtory is a good example of pleaſantry well-timed. I will not ſay (what

I know many people think) that a few lucky ſtrokes of confident vivacity induced the world to deem much higher of his Lordſhip's wit than it really deſerved; but, giving him full credit, as a true proprietor of this graceful feather, I muſt not allow you to conſider it as equivalent to the more ſolid treaſures of Johnſon's moral wiſdom and virtue.

THE COLONEL.

Nor can I permit you, my dear and reſpected opponent, to aſſume as inconteſtible an opinion, which ſome honeſt people, indeed, have aſſumed too haſtily—that Johnſon was a compound of every thing that is morally good, and Cheſterfield of every thing that is morally evil.—If I can ſhew

you, that the accomplifhed Earl had in truth as much wifdom and virtue as the arrogant Philofopher, with his own rich inheritance of native wit into the bargain, you muft certainly allow him to be the more admirable character of the two. That he was, indeed, neither lefs wife nor lefs virtuous than Johnfon, is fufficiently evident to me, from a little furvey that I have taken of what I may call the morning and the evening in the lives of each.—Let me fet the two men before you, for an inftant, in thofe ftriking periods of their exiftence. At the age of thirty, a feafon when the firft whirlwind of the paffions has fubfided, and the mind of man begins to affume a fettled temperature, how do we find Johnfon employed? Why truly, in writing a rebellious pamphlet,

pamphlet, which his very biographer repreſents as mean in its execution, and deteſtable in its deſign.—Now let me direct your eyes to Cheſterfield, at the ſame age.—What was the noble Lord doing at thirty? In this year of his life, I find him giving an early example of that generous integrity, which he maintained through every ſtage of his political career—and politely rejecting the advice of thoſe, who recommended it to him to increaſe the profits of a poſt that he had juſt accepted, by ſelling the ſubordinate places in his diſpoſal. You may tell me, perhaps, that ſuch an early compariſon of the two men, in a point of political purity, conſidering the difference of their birth and ſtation, is neither candid nor juſt. Let us look then at the two veterans, when

each was turned of ſeventy, when both were preparing to quit the ſtage of life, the Philoſopher weary of having inſtructed the world, and the Wit of having enlivened it. At ſuch a ſeaſon, if the Philoſopher had indeed been a man of ſound wiſdom and virtue, we might expect to find him calmly and chearfully looking forward to an immortal reward for the benefits which his labour had beſtowed upon mankind; and if the gayer life of the Wit had in truth been a mere tiſſue of vice and folly, we might expect alſo to behold him, at this important ſeaſon, ſinking under the dread of a tremendous retribution. Now, are theſe the reſpective conditions in which we may actually contemplate theſe two oppoſite, but illuſtrious old men? No! it is juſt the

reverſe.

reverſe. We ſee the imperious Philoſopher looking back with remorſe, looking forward with conſternation, and ſtrangely converting a juſtice of peace into a confeſſor, to tell him *more ſecret tranſgreſſions than he was willing to hear.* —Now take a view of the ſuperannuated Wit, ſo unjuſtly ſuſpected of a ſettled depravity in heart and ſpirit. We find him, and I beg you will obſerve the contraſt, ſoothing the ills of departing life, and particularly that moſt depreſſive affliction, his long and incurable deafneſs, by pouring out all his manly and natural feelings, in letters of the moſt tender friendſhip to a venerable prelate—a prelate, who was long his boſom-friend; whom he had raiſed, in a generous manner, that did himſelf ſingular honour, to epiſcopal dignity; and

who, to his own credit, and to that of his noble patron, was diſtinguiſhed by the glorious appellation of the Good Biſhop.——It was thus that Johnſon and Cheſterfield firſt appeared on our clamorous theatre of the world, and it was thus they quitted it. They are now gone to their great audit, before the Judge of every heart, who alone, perhaps, can truly decide, which was indeed the man of moſt wiſdom and virtue. As far as their own books, and the printed accounts of both, can enable my limited faculties to form a juſt eſtimate of the two characters, I declare, and I entreat you not to condemn me too haſtily for my declaration, that were I acting under Heaven as a judge, to decide the merits of the two,

I ſhould rather give the palm of virtue to Cheſterfield than to Johnſon.

LADY CAROLINE.

Our good friend, I perceive, is amazed and ſhocked by the ſingularity and confidence of your opinion!—and even I, who know you better, muſt confeſs myſelf a little ſurprized at your carrying your partiality ſo far!—I thought you would have contented yourſelf with an *as wiſe* and *as good*, a kind of hand-in-hand compariſon, as Shakeſpeare ſays: but your beſtowing the palm of Goodneſs on a character univerſally condemned for immorality, is a ſtroke of whimſical enthuſiaſm that I did not expect!—Let me remind you, however, that we are departing from the plan we propoſed to ourſelves in this amicable debate.

debate. Pray recollect, that the Archdeacon is firſt to ſtate all the flagrant and numerous defects in your too engaging favourite; and then you are to conclude, not with his apology, I find, but his panegyric.

THE ARCHDEACON.

As the Colonel diſcovers ſo much zeal in the cauſe, I beg that we may allow him to conduct the defence he has undertaken, in any mode that he chuſes. You and I, my dear Lady, are at a time of life to be amuſed, inſtead of corrupted, by the magic of deluſive eloquence, however ſubtle it may be; and for my own part, I am highly entertained in obſerving, with what acute ingenuity a very upright and religious mind, when under the influence

influence of affectionate prejudice, can decorate a favourite, though faulty character. Our honeſt enthuſiaſt has undoubtedly deceived himſelf, and he has, I am perſuaded, ſufficient talents to communicate that deception to others, during the moment when he is ſpeaking. Yet, were he ſpeaking to the world at large on this topic, I ſhould be under no apprehenſion of his reverſing the juſt decree of the public on the two characters in queſtion; and for this ſhort and ſimple reaſon—The public, however dazzled by my oratorical friend, would ſoon recollect the infallible teſt it poſſeſſes to decide the real merits of both; and wiſely ſay to itſelf, By their works we may know them.—The Philoſopher, however tainted by perſonal defects, has

bequeathed

bequeathed to us an invaluable legacy of the ſublimeſt moral inſtruction; and the Wit, however decorated by perſonal dignities, has left us little more than an elegant manual of profligate advice, ſo improperly addreſſed by a parent to his child, that it has juſtly excited a general murmur of abhorrence.

THE COLONEL.

Surely, my good friend, you are ſpeaking only to try my temper. You cannot, I am confident, you cannot have ſeriouſly adopted the cruel abſurdity of the world, concerning the letters you allude to. O that I poſſeſſed indeed that divine talent of eloquence which your laughingly aſcribe to me, and for which I am ſo little faſhioned by nature or education! Were I really maſter of

that

that enchanting power, I hardly know a ſubject on which I ſhould more delight to employ it, than in doing juſtice to a man who deſerved ſo highly of this nation, and whoſe character has been ſo baſely degraded.—We talk of the frequent cruelty and injuſtice of Athens, to the virtue that defended her walls, and to the talents that immortalized her glory; but I queſtion if ever any meritorious Athenian ever experienced ſuch poſthumous ingratitude (if I may uſe ſuch an expreſſion) from his capricious fellow-citizens, as Cheſterfield has received from us. Let me remind you, that he was juſtly eſteemed, for half a century, as one of the moſt accompliſhed characters in this kingdom. He ſerved his country as an ambaſſador in Holland; and made the pureſt characters of that

republic

republic his friends. He ſerved his country as a governor of Ireland, at a period of great difficulty and danger; and his virtues appeared to expand with his power. He ſerved his country as a miniſter at home; and nobly quitted his place, the moment he found it inconſiſtent with his integrity and honour. He reſigned, not to indulge himſelf in factious turbulence, but in literary retirement. Study and converſation were, indeed, among his favourite amuſements, at every ſeaſon of life; for the native caſt of his character was rather gentle than vehement; and he oppoſed his enemies rather with gaiety than rancour. In the courſe of a buſy and ſplendid life, he found time to write a few periodical leſſons on life and manners, in which he equalled the firſt authors

thors in that branch of literature; and, having ſufficiently proved his taſte, by his own admirable productions, he was univerſally regarded as the moſt accompliſhed patron of letters. His manners, and his wit, were ſo engaging, that he was long eſteemed the chief ornament and delight of ſociety, and the eminent characters of every country in Europe appeared ambitious of his acquaintance and regard. His latter days were embittered with many bodily infirmities, which he ſupported, however, with a chearful and religious philoſophy, in conſidering this life as a fugitive dream, that he did not wiſh to renew, and in thinking of his Creator, as he tells his boſom friend, the good Biſhop of Waterford, with more hope than fear.— So lived and ſo died the Earl of Cheſterfield,

field, reſpected by the world, and idolized by his friends.—But a Lady, who had great reaſon to think well of the noble Lord, ſeized the opportunity of his deceaſe, to publiſh a collection of letters written for a very private and very particular purpoſe. She knew that they had been dictated by the parental tenderneſs of a good heart; and ſhe did not foreſee, that the public could ingeniouſly miſinterpret them, ſo far as to call them the ſuggeſtions of an evil ſpirit; but, as there is a conſtant eagerneſs in mankind to ſeize, even the ſlighteſt opportunity of degrading an exalted name, as ſoon as theſe letters were publiſhed, an outcry was raiſed againſt them, by many hypocritical pretenders to goodneſs, and by many truly good people, who wanted either faculties or patience

patience to form a fair eſtimate of their author. Malevolent ridicule ſcattered her gibes on the father, ſo ſolicitouſly ſtriving to improve the awkward perſon of his child; and miſtaken piety repreſented him as a prodigy of wickedneſs, labouring to infuſe all his own follies and vices into his offspring, and to eſtabliſh a corrupt ſyſtem of education, that would annihilate all the virtue of our country. But, after all, what is this maſter-piece of profligacy, when examined by truth and candour? It is a ſingular, and, in many points, the moſt admirable monument of paternal tenderneſs and anxiety, that the literature of any nation can exhibit; it is a work, that, inſtead of corrupting our ſons, may rather ſtimulate their parents to a quicker ſenſe of their duty, by ſhewing us, that

a man, in all the tumultuous buſtle of buſy, of gay, and of ſplendid life, could find time to labour with inceſſant attention in trying to counteract the peculiar perſonal imperfections of a dear, though awkward ſon.—O Cheſterfield! I have read thee with the eyes of a father, anxious not only for the temporal but the eternal intereſt of his children; and my heart tells me, that in the ſight of our great all ſeeing Parent, the work for which thou art vilified on earth muſt have more of merit than of ſin.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Though every thing may be hoped from the mercy of the Supreme Judge, I cannot ſee how the common juſtice of mankind can abſolve a parent, who even inſtigates his ſon to indulge himſelf in

crimes that are eminently pernicious to the peace and happineſs of the world.

THE COLONEL.

Is it candid, is it juſt, or, I ſhould rather ſay, is it not the height of iniquitous cruelty, to give ſo dark an interpretation to idle raillery, in a familiar letter, which, like the jeſts of private converſation, ſhould be conſidered only as the idle pleaſantry of the moment?—To defend licentiouſneſs, by ſaying, it was recommended only in a country whoſe cuſtoms appeared to give it a ſanction, is an argument, which, though it may extenuate the offence, is far from being, according to my ideas, the beſt vindication that we may urge for the noble Lord.—All the immoral advice of Cheſterfield, may be compared to a drug,

which, though it is rank poiſon if ſwallowed indiſcriminately by the multitude, may operate as an innocent and uſeful medicine to a particular patient.— The diſeaſe of young Stanhope, to purſue the metaphor, was awkwardneſs in the extreme, and gallantry was the preſcription of Cheſterfield. By giving his ſon credit, in theſe private letters, for more influence over the fair than he was formed to attain, the father might mean no more, than to lead him frequently into ſuch female ſociety as had the beſt chance of rendering him leſs an object of ridicule. Immorality of this kind, we hear every day in the ſportive ſallies of converſation between parents and children, where no real act of licentiouſneſs is intended, and where no cenſure falls on the jeſting preacher of very ſimi-

lar

lar doctrine.—It is particularly cruel, to give the darkeſt interpretation to the licentious levity of theſe motley letters, when the ſame correſpondence affords us many ſerious paſſages of the pureſt morality.—There is a double injuſtice in the common cenſure on theſe admirable letters:—they are condemned as a general ſyſtem, when they were expreſsly deſigned to correct the particular blemiſhes of an individual—they are condemned for not ſpeaking more of morality and religion, when the author informs us, he had intentionally left thoſe points to a worthy delegate. Yet that he touched upon them ſometimes, and did it with all the affecting energy of a father truly anxious for the moral excellence of his ſon, I hope to convince

you, by reading the few following extracts.

Pray obſerve, with what honeſt and ſerious warmth this ſuppoſed advocate for vice, exhorts his young diſciple to the moſt ſcrupulous integrity.

" Your moral character muſt be not
" only pure, but, like Cæſar's wife, un-
" ſuſpected. The leaſt ſpeck or ble-
" miſh upon it is fatal. Nothing de-
" grades and vilifies more; for it excites
" and unites deteſtation and contempt.
" There are, however, wretches in the
" world profligate enough to explode
" all notions of moral good and evil;
" to maintain that they are merely local,
" and depend entirely upon the cuſ-
" toms and faſhions of different coun-
" tries: nay, there are ſtill, if poſſible,

" more

" more unaccountable wretches; I mean,
" those who affect to preach and propa-
" gate such absurd and infamous no-
" tions without believing them them-
" selves. These are the devil's hypo-
" crites. Avoid, as much as possible, the
" company of such people; who reflect
" a degree of discredit and infamy upon
" all who converse with them. But, as
" you may sometimes by accident fall
" into such company, take great care,
" that no complaisance, no good-hu-
" mour, no warmth of festal mirth, ever
" make you seem even to acquiesce,
" much less to approve or applaud such
" infamous doctrines *."

Can the most rigid moralist, that ever existed, surpass the rectitude and the

* Chesterfield's Letters to his Son, Letter 180.

ſervency of theſe admonitions—not delivered, indeed, with the bloated affectation of pompous and pointed ſentences, but breathing the tenderneſs and the warmth of a pure parental ſpirit.

The Ladies, in their laudable zeal for the honour of their ſex, are angry with Cheſterfield, for repreſenting them as unable to keep a ſecret; but they forget the great object he had in view: it was to form a miniſter for foreign courts; and his caution therefore, on this article, was only guarding his ſon againſt thoſe inſinuating enemies, to which an Ambaſſador is particularly expoſed.

The noble Author is accuſed of preferring *manners* to *morals*. I intreat you to hear how juſtly he maintains, in the following paſſage, the pre-eminence of the latter.

" Good

" Good manners are to particular ſo-
" cieties, what good morals are to ſociety
" in general; their cement and their ſe-
" curity—and, as laws are enacted to en-
" force good morals, or at leaſt to pre-
" vent the ill effects of bad ones, ſo
" there are certain rules of civility uni-
" verſally implied and received to en-
" force good manners and puniſh bad
" ones: and indeed there ſeems to me
" to be leſs difference, both between the
" crimes and the puniſhments, than at
" firſt one would imagine. The im-
" moral man, who invades another man's
" property, is juſtly hanged for it; and
" the ill-bred man, who by his ill man-
" ners invades and diſturbs the quiet
" and comforts of private life, is by
" common conſent as juſtly baniſhed
" ſociety. Mutual complaiſances, atten-

" tions, and ſacrifices of little conveni-
" ences, are as natural an implied com-
" pact between civilized people, as pro-
" tection and obedience are between
" kings and ſubjects; whoever, in either
" caſe, violates that compact, juſtly for-
" feits all advantages ariſing from it.
" For my own part, I really think, that,
" *next* to the conſciouſneſs of doing *a*
" *good action*, that of doing a civil one
" is the moſt pleaſing; and the epithet
" which I ſhould covet the moſt, *next to*
" *that of Ariſtides*, would be that of
" well-bred *."

Again, in the cloſe of the ſame letter,
" Be convinced, that good-breeding is,
" to all worldly qualifications, what cha-
" rity is to all Chriſtian virtues."

Can any preceptor, my good friend,

* Letter 168.

exhibit

exhibit ſounder ſentiments than theſe, either as to exterior accompliſhment or internal perfection?

THE ARCHDEACON.

Like a ſkilful advocate, you have ſhewn us the fair ſide of your client; but had his book been entirely of this complexion, its purity had never been impeached. I believe, we might oppoſe to your quotations innumerable paſſages of an oppoſite tendency. But as, I muſt confeſs, I have not looked into this manual of politeneſs for ſeveral years, I ſhall not attempt to enforce my general charge againſt it, eſpecially as you have anſwered that charge by a palliating argument, which, though it would hardly ſupport any ſevere ſcrutiny, is, I am perſuaded, ſo ſufficiently concluſive to

your

your partial good-nature, that I ſhould deſpair of converting you.

LADY CAROLINE.

You ſeem perfectly aware of my brother's foible, which is, a generous propenſity to think every writer virtuous, who diſplays the particular talents that afford him the higheſt pleaſure. You might have found him, the other day, as warmly engaged in defending the moral character of Sterne.

THE COLONEL.

Pardon me! I only ſaid, that if Sterne was in truth the ſorry character which many auſtere people affect to call him, I ſuppoſed he was prompted to write by his good genius, that, in the regiſter of the recording angel, the merits of the

author

author might counterbalance all the ſins of the man.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Yet, you know, that many human inquiſitors have rather claſſed his writings in the catalogue of his tranſgreſſions.

THE COLONEL.

Yes! and I am perfectly aware that your ſplenetic Moraliſt was one of thoſe inquiſitors. But I can never ſubſcribe to the ſevere ſentence of a judge, when every fibre in my head and heart aſſure me of his iniquity.—There are glaring defects in the compoſitions of Sterne, but the general effect of them is meritorious in the higheſt degree. All the elaborate, all the oſtentatiouſly moral volumes of Johnſon can never impreſs

on

on my mind ſuch fervent ſentiments of reverential gratitude to Heaven, or of good-will to earth, as I receive from a few pages of the incomparable Sterne. —Perhaps no author ever poſſeſſed, in ſo high a degree, the ineſtimable talent of putting the untuned ſpirit into harmony with itſelf, and with all around it. If I take him up in a reſtleſs or gloomy fit, he not only chaces from my mind every veſtige of ſpleen, but leaves in its place a diſpoſition to chearful piety and active benevolence.

LADY CAROLINE.

You have utterly forgot, my dear rambling enthuſiaſt, the noble Lord, whoſe real or imaginary perfections you were to ſtate to us; though I fancy, from the appearance of the paper in your hand,

hand, you have many more remarks to communicate for the illuſtration of his character.

THE COLONEL.

Thanks, ſweet remembrancer! Let me look at my references for a moment, and I will proceed in due order. We propoſed to compare Cheſterfield and Johnſon in three different lights; firſt, as men or citizens; ſecondly, as periodical lecturers on life and manners; and laſtly, as writers, in point of ſtyle.—Since I find the Archdeacon is too candid in his own ſentiments, or too indulgent to my opinion of the party I am defending, to dwell with great vehemence on the charge againſt my client, I ſhall conclude my deſultory pleading, by a few brief obſervations, arranged under the

the three heads I have mentioned, requeſting my worthy friend to correct me where I am groſsly miſtaken; and I ſhall then entreat your Ladyſhip to favour us with your frank and genuine ſentiments on the two characters in queſtion.

I ſhall begin with pointing out to you a very ſtriking difference between Cheſterfield and Johnſon, in an article which I conſider as a great teſt of an amiable heart, I mean, Friendſhip. From the letters of the noble Lord to the Biſhop of Waterford and Mr. Dayrolles, it is evident, that he took the moſt lively intereſt in all the concerns of thoſe two valuable men.—Indebted as they both were to his patronage, and inferior to him in talents, he never ſpeaks to them in a tone of ſuperiority;

periority, but upon every occaſion as a ſincere and ſympathetic friend. Pray obſerve, from the following paſſage in this correſpondence, how the ſuppoſed advocate for univerſal licentiouſneſs in youth, ſpeaks to thoſe he loved on the education of their children.

" A father's care of his ſon's morals
" and manners, is ſurely more uſeful
" than the critical knowledge of Homer
" and Virgil, ſuppoſing that it were,
" which it very ſeldom is, acquired at
" ſchools: I do not, therefore, heſitate
" to adviſe you, to put your ſon to
" the beſt ſchool, that is, the neareſt to
" your uſual place of reſidence, that
" you may ſee and examine him often
" and ſtrictly, and watch his progreſs,
" not only in learning, but in morals
" and manners, inſtead of truſting to

" interested accounts of distant school-
" masters *."

But my esteem for Chesterfield, in this point of view, is principally founded on his character of his bosom friend, my Lord Scarborough, one of the most beautiful and pathetic portraits of an amiable but unhappy mind, that was ever delineated by truth and tenderness; so very beautiful, that I think no one can read the composition, short as it is, without saying of its author, This man had indeed a heart for friendship, and the talent of describing those he loved in the genuine language of nature.

Now turn to Johnson.—In all his elaborate volumes, you discover no

* Twelfth Letter to the Bishop of Waterford.

vestiges

veſtiges of his having enjoyed the inestimable bleſſing of true cordial friendſhip; no marks of that fond and amiable gratitude, which has induced ſo many great authors to delineate and immortalize the perſons who contributed to their happineſs or their glory. — It has been obſerved, that he never prefixed a dedication to any one of his various works; a circumſtance that argues, to my apprehenſion, not ſo much an independent, as a proud, unfeeling, and ſurly ſpirit. For though dedications have too often conſiſted of baſe flattery to opulence and grandeur; they have frequently appeared as pleaſing and graceful offerings to friendſhip, and ſometimes as a proper tribute to particular ſtations. It is, I think, with equal malevolence and injuſtice, that Johnſon

accuſes Addiſon of *ſervile abſurdity*, in dedicating his Opera of Roſamond to the Dutcheſs of Marlborough, as the poet had exhibited, in a prophetic ſcene of his drama, the very manſion, of which the juſt liberality of the kingdom had made this Lady the miſtreſs. His inſcribing the Opera to her, was ſurely an act of blameleſs and becoming civility. This, indeed, is not the only inſtance of Johnſon's malignity to Addiſon, an author whoſe life, whoſe writings, and whoſe death, exhibit ſuch abundance of the pureſt merit, that I can hardly think the man a true and perfect lover of genius or virtue, who ſpeaks of him in groſs terms of ſarcaſtic contempt.

But to return to the article that I was ſpeaking of.—Had Johnſon poſſeſſed

a heart for friendſhip, he muſt have enjoyed all the reciprocal delights and advantages of that bleſſing, in his long connexion with Garrick.—They had ſet out hand in hand, to make their way together through the chances of a world to which they were equally ſtrangers, and had jointly borrowed five pounds, in a moment of mutual diſtreſs, on the credit of the future Comedian. Such a circumſtance was almoſt ſufficient in itſelf to have made them ſincere friends for ever, had their ſouls been of the true friendly temper; as there ſeem to be few bonds of union more laſting among men, than that of having paſſed through early hardſhips together. In my own profeſſion, I have ſeen the force of this cement among our ſoldiers very wonderfully exempli-

fied. But there were other conſiderations that might have made Johnſon a cordial friend to Garrick. Their talents were of ſo different a nature, that no rivalſhip could exiſt between them; and accordingly we find Garrick, who was apt, indeed, to be alarmed at every ſhadow of a rival in his profeſſion, was ever ready to beſtow the moſt hearty applauſe on the real merits of his old aſſociate. Patient under his dogmatical aſperity, and indulgent to his humour, he almoſt revered and obeyed him as a parent; yet the ſplenetic ſavage, unſoftened by this filial homage, had the barbarity to mortify this boſom-friend of his early and indigent days, by excluding him from a little club, to which he ſued for admiſſion. This ſingle anecdote of

Johnſon

Johnſon is ſufficient, in my opinion, to mark him for a brute.

THE ARCHDEACON.

You are running again, my good friend, into an exceſs of ſeverity. You forget that Garrick had his failings as well as Johnſon, perhaps greater failings, without an equal counterpoiſe of perfection. By talents of a claſs far inferior to thoſe of the Philoſopher, he had riſen to the intoxicating joys of opulent ſplendor, and is ſaid, you know, to have inſulted, by an oſtentatious diſplay of his magnificence, his leſs fortunate old friend; who, like many other laborious men of letters, had been a drudge for years, without raiſing a competence for the decline of life. For my own part, I never think of theſe two

extraordinary men, without lamenting in my heart, that they ſo little exerted the great powers which they both poſſeſſed, of contributing to the happineſs and to the glory of each other. You know, my friend, that although I am in ſome points, as Lady Caroline calls me, an idolater of Johnſon, I am far from adopting his gloomy ideas of human life. On the contrary, I think our earth, which is often a pleaſant habitation as it is, would be for ſome years a delightful reſidence indeed, if every man ſeized the opportunity of doing the noble things within his faculties to accompliſh, without indulging any malevolent or narrow-minded ideas.—For inſtance, had Garrick poſſeſſed a great ſoul, how happily might he have reſcued his old friend from debaſing himſelf in the eyes of

many,

many, by the acceptance of that penſion to which he had haſtily annexed, in his dictionary, ſo odious a definition! How well might Garrick have ſpared, from his ample revenue, an annuity of equal value! and how much would it have added to his reputation and delight, if he had employed a part of that wealth, which he derived from the partial liberality of the public, in ſecuring independence, not only to the friend of his youth, but to a mighty genius, who, from the peculiar infelicities that belong to authorſhip, could hardly earn more than his daily bread by ſuch exertions of intellect as do honour to his country!

THE COLONEL.

Had Garrick poſſeſſed the princely ſpirit to confer ſuch a benefit (which at times, I believe,

I believe, he really did) your ſplenetic Philoſopher had too much pride to accept it;—though I perfectly agree with you, in thinking it more pleaſant and more honourable to receive the bleſſing of independence from the bounty of a friend than from the penſion of a ſovereign, however gracious, to whoſe family and title the heart of the penſioner was known to have been a rebel.

LADY CAROLINE.

You amaze me, my dear diſputants, by agreeing in a point where I differ ſo widely from you both, that I cannot refrain from an immediate declaration of my diſſent.

Surely, to have accepted ſo large a gratuity from a ſubject, however exalted, muſt have been utterly inconſiſtent with the

the dignity of Johnſon. In receiving a penſion from a ſovereign, who has frequently ſhewn a diſpoſition to correct the injuſtice of fortune towards literary genius, he had the ſanction of cuſtom and of propriety in his favour.

THE COLONEL.

As this is a point that depends chiefly on delicacy of feeling, you are probably in the right; though, I confeſs, I cannot agree with you.—But allow me to reſume my argument. It is clear that Johnſon did not love Garrick, though he had many reaſons to do ſo; and it is equally clear, that the incurable envy of your moral Philoſopher was the cauſe. I want no additional proof that he was utterly unfit for true laſting friendſhip. The friends of an envious man can have

no

no ſecurity for the continuance of his regard, but their own inſignificance. If they happen, by any ſucceſsful talents, to improve their title to his affection, they will inevitably loſe it.—An attempt to maintain a friendſhip with an envious character, will probably produce a diſappointment very ſimilar to what was lately felt by a naturaliſt of my acquaintance, who, intending to preſerve a favourite rarity in a bottle of pure ſpirits, found it put by miſtake into a veſſel of *aqua fortis*, which annihilated the treaſure that it was expected to preſerve.

THE ARCHDEACON.

The force and aptitude of your ſimile is a full vindication of my Philoſopher; for, while I agree with you, that envy is, in truth, a corroſive of power ſufficient

to

to annihilate friendſhip, I muſt obſerve, that the long intimacy which Johnſon enjoyed with many reſpectable and celebrated names, is a proof that if he was not perfectly exempt from this defect, its exiſtence only added to the triumphs of his virtue.

THE COLONEL.

I cannot agree with you in your concluſion; for I find no public traces of his having praiſed the names you allude to, in the language of perfect affection; and ſurely thoſe who have exhibited his character to the world, rather ſpeak of him as a prodigy they admired, than as a friend they loved. He was, in truth, ſo great a prodigy, both in his faculties and his failings, that I hardly think it poſſible for any man to have contracted

tracted an intimacy with him much superior to the kind of friendship that subsists between a show-man and the lion that he exhibits. Indeed it has been observed, that the favourite and most adroit leader of the monster, who ventured to sport with him most familiarly, could not always withdraw himself from his paw without severe laceration.

THE ARCHDEACON.

The preference that your fancy gives to Chesterfield against Johnson, seems founded on your idea of your favourite's companionable attractions: yet surely, if the merits of the men might be fairly estimated by their powers of amusing a companion, the Earl could not triumph on this ground; for I apprehend his

conversation,

converſation, if compared to that of Johnſon, was like the ſoothing murmur of a rill, compared to the majeſtic roar of a torrent.—As to mirth, no witty repartee of the noble Lord, could more happily excite ſurprize and laughter, than the lively ſallies of Johnſon, both in proſe and verſe.

But your imagination is ſo much haunted by ideas of his ferocity, that you neither do juſtice to his wit, nor to the acknowledged tenderneſs of his heart,—which was ſo ſingularly humane, that I believe no author of his eminence ever afforded ſo much literary aſſiſtance to thoſe who implored it. Perſons who have been diſtinguiſhed by the public diſplay of any talent, are apt, in general, to entertain an important ſuſpicious dread of debaſing their dignity, by condeſcending

deſcending to employ themſelves in any petty work for a benevolent purpoſe.—From this frequent and ridiculous foible the great humanity of Johnſon completely exempted him. Whenever ſolicited by diſtreſs, he was ready, you know, to contribute either a prologue or a petition.

THE COLONEL.

Do not ſuppoſe me ſo blind, or ſo unjuſt, as not to perceive and revere his ſignal readineſs to aſſiſt the wretched. He had, certainly, ſincere and active compaſſion for great calamities; but this is a caſt of mind very different from that which leads a man to perfect amity with the proſperous and the eminent. A poet, who is more kind than ſevere to the

the character of your Philoſopher, very truly and happily tells us,

He proudly ſplenetic, yet idly vain,
Accepted flattery and dealt diſdain *

This diſpoſition is indeed diſcernible in every portrait of Johnſon; and ſurely nothing can be more incompatible with the true ſpirit of friendſhip. I conceive, therefore, that he entertained, for the perſons who were moſt beloved by him, ſuch a ſort of regard as we may ſuppoſe the Man-mountain to have beſtowed on thoſe half-flattered and half-frightened Lilliputians, whom he deigned to elevate in the palm of his hand; and for whom he ſometimes condeſcend-

* Poetical Review of Johnſon by John Courtenay, Eſq.

ed to ſoften the portentous ſound of his voice.

But let me haſten to my ſecond article, and compare your Philoſopher with Cheſterfield, as a periodical moraliſt.

As our religion informs us, that it is very difficult for a rich man to find the way to heaven; ſo may we conceive, that it is hardly leſs difficult for a man of quality, buſineſs, and faſhion, to render himſelf equal to our accompliſhed authors. He who was nurſed by vanity, and tutored by pomp, deſerves, I think, no little praiſe, if he has delivered moral lectures not inferior to thoſe of a philoſopher, who had adverſity to teach, and poverty to inſpire him. In naming poverty, I cannot help reminding you of your Philoſopher's very ſingular opinion, in regarding it as the only effi-

cacious inſpirer; an opinion which induces me to believe, that, had he been born in the rank of Cheſterfield, he would have proved, if not the moſt ſenſual, at leaſt the moſt indolent of our modern voluptuaries. But, in the midſt of many temptations to be idle and voluptuous, we find my noble favourite exerting his natural and acquired talents to improve the morals of his countrymen; and I will venture to affirm, that the moral papers contained in his miſcellaneous works, are full as well, if not better, calculated to anſwer their purpoſe, than thoſe pompous diſſertations of your Philoſopher, where the two authors afford the faireſt ground for a compariſon, in the ſimilarity of their ſubject. As a ſtrong caſe in point, I beg you to compare, at your leiſure, the ad-

mirable paper in Chesterfield, on the luxury of the table (which forms the sixteenth number of a periodical work, intitled Common Sense) with the paper on gluttony in your favourite Rambler.—If you compare also the introductory number in each of these publications, you will clearly perceive, I think, that the talents of Chesterfield were more suited, than those of Johnson, to the production of attractive and useful little lectures on life and manners. If you want farther proofs of this assertion, you may find them, I am persuaded, in the papers that he contributed to *The World*, particularly those on drinking, and civility, which live in the memory of every reader.—As Moralists, they seem to bear the same relation to each other that exists between the elegant,

gant, the penetrating Horace, and the forcible declamatory Juvenal. The engaging eaſe of Cheſterfield's ſtyle, and the ſportive graces of his wit, were peculiarly adapted to render him excellent as the eſſayiſt of a day. When they are compared together in this light, Johnſon is to Cheſterfield what the Piony is to the Roſe—of a grander form, of more forcible and richer colouring, yet not ſo pleaſant; to be ſurveyed with diſtant admiration, but not eagerly received into the boſom.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I will not be ſo barbarous to your flowery metaphor, as to ſay, that I preſume you mean only the Canker-roſe.

LADY CAROLINE.

Very well, my good friend!—this is a fair and very gentle touch of retaliation for all the ſeverity with which your admired Philoſopher has been treated. I confeſs, I have expected you to retaliate with much greater warmth on the weak ſide of your antagoniſt—I mean, the irreligion of his favourite.

THE ARCHDEACON.

To ſpeak honeſtly, I could not in my conſcience attack my adverſary on that ground; for I perfectly recollect that Lord Cheſterfield repeatedly inculcates, not only the moſt decent reſpect to religion herſelf, but to all her miniſters. I am afraid, indeed, that his religious ſentiments were not ſuch as I, who am

by

by no means one of his profeſt admirers, moſt ſincerely wiſh them to have been; yet, as this is a buſineſs between his own heart and Heaven, I do not conceive that any man has a right to ſuppoſe him an infidel, and then to cenſure him on the ſuppoſition.—This would be contrary to the fundamental principles of Engliſh liberty and juſtice, not to ſpeak of it as a violation of Chriſtian charity.

THE COLONEL.

I reverence you, my worthy friend, for this candour, and wiſh it were univerſal.—Cheſterfield is condemned as irreligious; yet, ſo far from finding any traces of this offence in his writings, I find, that in one of his French letters he expreſsly condemns the irreligion of

Voltaire, partial as he was to that enchanting writer, from a perſonal acquaintance.—Cheſterfield is alſo condemned as a Frenchified ſop; yet no man has written more forcibly againſt our copying the follies of France. Indeed, no man ſeems to have better underſtood or more highly valued the liberties of his country; and with what ſpirit he could ſupport the manly frankneſs and undaunted truth of the Engliſh character, in ſpeaking to a Frenchman, we have a ſtriking example in his letter to the Abbé de la Ville, the French miniſter at the Hague, on ſeveral particulars relating to the battle of Fontenoy. He has indeed been cruelly depreciated. Your Philoſopher, you know, very mercifully conſidered him as a *rotten poſt*, to uſe his own gentle phraſe;

but

but if there were ſome unſound parts (and who is perfect?) in the character of the noble Lord, there was, I apprehend, a ſtill larger portion of touchwood in the Philoſopher himſelf.—I have never ſeen the letter in which he renounced the patronage, that he appeared to have contemplated with no little ſatisfaction, but, from all the accounts that I have met with of that incident, I think we may rather blame the ſplenetic pride of Johnſon, than the inſolence or meanneſs of Cheſterfield.—In the ſarcaſms which they levelled at each other, the latter ſurely approaches neareſt to the truth: the Critic was unqueſtionably more like a ſavage than the Wit was like a dancing-maſter.—Cheſterfield had his foibles and his vices. He was, in his early life, a ſlave to the tyrannous vice

of

of gaming; but how ingenuouſly and parentally does he confeſs and lament it in his letters!—and, give me leave to add, that he once derived no little honour from a ſignal victory over this deſpotic paſſion. I allude to his conduct as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland.—You know that he baniſhed gaming entirely from the caſtle of Dublin; and ſurely the man is entitled to credit for ſome nobleneſs of mind, who enters on the exerciſe of ſovereign power by the ſacrifice of his own darling defect.—Believe me, I am not blind to his private failings, and I heartily wiſh, for his own happineſs, that they had never exiſted; but I ſtill aſſert, that he had public merit ſufficient to balance all his imperfections. Let hypocriſy and malevolence, or, if you pleaſe, let virtue herſelf deride him to the uttermoſt,

termoſt, as a vain and licentious puppet of quality—I ſhall never ceaſe to think, that he has many genuine claims to that laſting glory which he had the ſpirit to love and to purſue: nor is he leſs entitled to the grateful remembrance of our country, than the arrogant and ſplenetic dogmatiſt, who has vilified the heroiſm of our Kings, and the genius of our Bards; a writer of verſes, not from the impulſe of nature, but the ſuggeſtions of intereſt or ſpleen; a critic, not from an enthuſiaſtic delight in poetry, but an envious hatred to poets.

THE ARCHDEACON.

That is a point which Time will ſettle with his uſual unfailing juſtice.—Though mankind are not always happy enough to diſtinguiſh their real friends from their

their foes, yet their judgment is generally juſt, when the candidate for their applauſe has nothing to truſt to but the poſthumous influence of his works. —Whatever charity may hope concerning the ſuppoſed irreligion of Cheſterfield, his immorality has too glaring an appearance to admit any doubt of its exiſtence; and the man who is vain and profligate enough to boaſt of his vices, is, I muſt confeſs, in my opinion, very far from deſerving ſuch an advocate as your favourite has found. Indeed the more rigid friends of virtue and religion may almoſt bluſh with indignation, in ſeeing two characters ſo very different compared to each other.—Johnſon, the refuge and the friend of every being in diſtreſs, compared to the oſtentatious man of quality, who affected to be the patron of

talents, which he wanted erudition to eſtimate, and liberality to reward—Johnſon, the eternal Moraliſt, who made every ſocial amuſement a ſtep in the acquiſition of knowledge, or in the improvement of the heart, compared to the licentious Wit, whoſe only ambition was to dazzle and amuſe—Johnſon, to haſten at once to that aweful ſcene where the compariſon is not only moſt obvious but moſt important—Johnſon cloſing a life of virtue and religion with faith in his Redeemer, and with humility ſufficient to tremble with aweful doubts of his own exemplary merit, compared to Cheſterfield, finiſhing a frivolous and diſſolute exiſtence with the affected ſeverity of a pagan Philoſopher.

THE

THE COLONEL.

If either party could have reaſon to bluſh indignantly at the compariſon, I maintain it muſt be Cheſterfield—Cheſterfield, the enchanting companion, whoſe converſation was a model of the moſt enlivening politeneſs, compared to the ſurly dogmatiſt, whoſe habitual diſcourſe was a compound of arrogance and ſpleen — Cheſterfield, the accompliſhed, the diligent ambaſſador, who never loſt a morning hour, compared to the lazy Moraliſt, who tells us, he waſted half his life in reſolving to riſe early, and in breaking that reſolve — Cheſterfield, the friendly editor, the juſt and delicate panegyriſt of one elegant and tender poet, compared to the invidious biographer, who has ſcattered

his

his inexhauſtible gall over the whole choir of Britiſh bards—Cheſterfield, the patriotic ſenator, pleading with elegance and energy for the freedom of the ſtage, compared to the ſervile author, induced by his political bigotry to write againſt the liberty of the preſs — Cheſterfield, the beneficent viceroy, who governed Ireland in ſuch a manner as to merit and receive the praiſe and benedictions of that lively people, compared to the moody traveller who viſited Scotland to inſult its nakedneſs, and to pour his ſuperſtitious execrations on the innocent deſcendants of its too zealous reformer —Cheſterfield, in ſhort, to finiſh with that important ſcene in which all men, however different in character and condition, muſt inevitably afford room for the moſt ſtriking compariſon—Cheſterfield,

field, I ſay, the real Sage, ready and willing to die, employing his lateſt breath in kind attention to his friend, compared to your pretended Philoſopher, who ſhuddered at the approaches of no early death, with an exceſs of puſillanimous horror, which has expoſed him to a more apt compariſon with the cowardly, effeminate Mecænas.

LADY CAROLINE.

A ſevere parallel, indeed! methodically drawn, and delivered with an oratorical vehemence that I never ſaw you aſſume before.—But, as I have exalted myſelf into a judicial office, let me imitate, my dear Colonel, the grand court of juſtice among your favourite Athenians (as thoſe ſapient judges always ſate, I think, in the dark, you may

may allow me to be a little like them) and let me forbid all the deluſive inſinuations of impaſſioned eloquence.—I have ſtill to requeſt from you both, a few remarks on the ſtyle of your reſpective favourites.—The Archdeacon, I believe, eſteems Johnſon the very Sampſon of language, as we lately heard him called by one of his more affected admirers.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Indeed, Madam, I think our language has infinite obligations to him; and the Colonel, who is a lover of ſpirit in every ſhape, can hardly prefer the looſe and feeble phraſeology of Cheſterfield, or of Addiſon, to the compact vigour of our energetic Philologiſt.

THE COLONEL.

Though you may probably think me ſeverely prejudiced againſt your favourite in ſome points, I truſt you will not think ſo in the article of diction: for I allow that we find frequent paſſages in Johnſon, where the amazing vigour of his expreſſion is equalled by its beauty. I recollect, in his character of Dryden, a ſentence that ſhews us the wonderful powers of his language. He there deſcribes a tendency to talk nonſenſe, in ſuch terms as render it an object of great ſublimity. Do you remember the words? I think they run thus: "He delighted to tread upon "the brink of meaning, where light "and darkneſs begin to mingle; to "approach the precipice of abſurdity,

"and

" and hover over the abyſs of unideal
" vacancy."—But there is an excellence which Johnſon has very juſtly remarked in Dryden's language, and which he greatly wanted himſelf. The excellence I mean, he deſcribes in a paragraph that I have tranſcribed in my memorandums, under the article we are ſpeaking of. Here it is:

" His ſtyle could not eaſily be imi-
" tated, either ſeriouſly or ludicrouſly;
" for, being always equable, and al-
" ways varied, it has no prominent
" or diſcriminative characters. The
" Beauty, who is totally free from
" diſproportion of parts and features,
" cannot be ridiculed by an over-
" charged reſemblance *."

* Life of Dryden.

If the excellence of language may be eſtimated by this ſtandard, that of Johnſon is aſſuredly very defective; for nothing is more eaſy than to execute a caricatura of his ſtyle. In reading him, we are frequently tempted to exclaim, as La Bruyere does on certain ſermons, O! what a rich figure is the antitheſis! it produces a whole Rambler. With a great command of words, he certainly wanted the noble and graceful ſimplicity which we admire in the capital writers of every country, from Homer, Plato, and Demoſthenes, down to that Addiſon, whom the partizans of your Philoſopher call a weak writer when compared to Johnſon; as there were once people in Rome, who preferred the eloquence of Seneca to that of Cicero.

The

The language of Chesterfield strikes me like a damsel in a fashionable morning dress of the most simple and captivating elegance. That of Johnson, is like a matron who has arrayed herself for some grand ceremonial, and heightened the austere dignity of her form, by all the rich stiffness of a flowery brocade.

If I were to compare the style of your Philosopher with that of Addison, I should say, that Johnson has the spirit, the grandeur, and the monotony of the kettle-drum; Addison, the rich variety of that sacred instrument, which can equally delight us with airy sweetness and awful solemnity. But as I am no connoisseur in the music of language, perhaps my idea is not so just

as the opinion of ſome good-natured critics upon ſtyle, who, while they are rattling a ſalt-box themſelves, have the kindneſs to tell their auditors, there is no ſtrength or body in the tones of an organ.

Let me return to the diction of Cheſterfield.—The beſt panegyric I can deviſe for it will be, to read you the following paragraph, addreſſed to him by your Philologiſt.

" I may hope, my Lord, that ſince " you, whoſe authority in our language " is ſo generally acknowledged, have " commiſſioned me to declare my own " opinion, I ſhall be conſidered as ex- " erciſing a kind of vicarious juriſdic- " tion; and that the power which might " have been denied to my own claim,

" will

"will be readily allowed me as the de-
"legate of your Lordſhip *."—You will readily allow, my good friend, that the man muſt have been no weak maſter in the ſcience of words, who could extort ſuch a compliment from an author uncommonly ſparing of literary courteſy to all living merit.—But I will not launch out into new cenſures on your idol. Indeed, as he has ſo frequently excited my ſpleen by his ſeverity towards various favourites of mine, both in politics and poetry, I may poſſibly harbour prejudices againſt him, almoſt as violent and cruel as his own—you, I think, have as ſtrong a bias in his favour, from your benevolent preſumption, that his real goodneſs was as

* Johnſon's Plan of an Engliſh Dictionary.

great as his oſtentatious diſplay of morality. But my ſiſter is a ſort of neutral power, who may fairly ſettle the difference between us; and I am ſure you will join with me in requeſting her to give us, I will not ſay her judgment, for the word would alarm and terrify her diffidence, but her genuine feelings towards the two characters in queſtion.

THE ARCHDEACON.

I join indeed moſt heartily in your requeſt; and beg leave, at the ſame time, to remind Lady Caroline, that ſhe is the true perfect judge, not only of moral but of literary merit, according to an honeſt and candid ſentiment of the mighty Critic himſelf; who ſays, you know, in ſpeaking with liberal praiſe of Gray's Elegy, "By the common ſenſe

"of

" of readers, uncorrupted with literary
" prejudices, after all the refinements
" of ſubtilty, and the dogmatiſm of
" learning, muſt be finally decided all
" claim to poetical honours *."

LADY CAROLINE.

You are very good, to encourage me by ſuch a quotation; but I really have not confidence enough to deliver any thing like a formal opinion upon characters of ſuch eminence, even to you with whom I am ſo familiar. I do not mean, however, to ſhrink entirely from your requeſt, which would, I think, be very unfair, after the entertainment that I have received from you both—and to pretend, that I have formed to myſelf no notions concerning two au-

* Life of Gray.

thors

thors whom you know I read very frequently, would be a foolish sort of prudery indeed: I shall tell you therefore, very frankly, how I have felt myself affected by your respective favourites. —To speak of them as men, I never felt in my life the slightest wish to have been personally acquainted with either; though in reading many authors, and Addison in particular, I have felt such a desire.—Johnson, I think, said to some young Lady, "Miss, I am a tame mon-"ster, you may stroke me." If he said so, for I do not recollect where I met with the anecdote, I apprehend his expression was not perfectly true.—He certainly was not more than half-tamed.—I do not believe that I could have been induced to give the fearless pat of friendly familiarity to either of these very opposite creatures. I am per-

ſuaded, that my hand would have ſhrunk from Johnſon, as from a hedge-hog; and from Cheſterfield, if not as an adder too venomous to be touched, yet certainly as an eel too ſlippery to be held. For, notwithſtanding my brother's panegyric on the friendly qualities of his idol, I cannot think that either he or the Philoſopher had a heart truly formed for that tender connection. They ſeem to me to have poſſeſſed an equal degree of ſelfiſhneſs, though it ſhewed itſelf under very different ſhapes—one was continually trying to bully, and the other to inveigle the world into an excluſive admiration of his particular talents. The men accuſe our ſex of being actuated by a ſpirit of rivalſhip and mutual injuſtice to each other. Yet ſurely this is not only as viſible among themſelves,

themſelves, but more productive of general diſadvantage. What the Archdeacon obſerved of Johnſon and Garrick, leads me to make a ſimilar obſervation on Johnſon and Cheſterfield. Had theſe two men, of rare and different talents, inſtead of kindling into a contemptuous animoſity, contracted a ſolid friendſhip, on the noble plan of honouring, of enjoying the perfections and correcting the deficiencies of each other, how infinitely might ſuch conduct have contributed to the pleaſure, improvement, happineſs, and laſting glory of both! But the defects in each were too ſtrong to let him derive all poſſible delight and advantage from the faculties of the other. Great as they both were in their ſeparate lines, I cannot think that either was truly entitled to the epithet of amiable

able or good; for I am equally offended by truth that is delivered with brutality, and by politeneſs that is utterly inſincere: I own myſelf as much an enemy to the ſplenetic malevolence of Johnſon, as to the licentious vanity of Cheſterfield. Could they have blended their better qualities; could the gaiety of the Wit have cured the ſpleen of the Philoſopher; and, could the ſtrong intellect of Johnſon have annihilated the libertiniſm of Cheſterfield, each might have been, what I think neither was, a truly accompliſhed and happy man: and each might have been rendered, by ſuch a proceſs, a more perfect and delightful writer; for, as it is, though we admire the wonderful underſtanding and energy of mind diſplayed by Johnſon, though we are charmed by the wit, elegance, and knowledge

of

of the world, that we find in Chesterfield, yet it is certain that each fails us in the very point where, from his particular pursuits, we might naturally suppose it most safe to take him as a guide. The literary judgments of Johnson, and the worldly admonitions of Chesterfield, appear to me equally unsound. The first are, surely, not consistent with truth and justice;—and for the latter, I am afraid no apologist can perfectly reconcile them to honesty and virtue. Yet there is such a mass of real, though different excellence, united to the gross failings of those two authors, that, as a parent anxious to collect every thing that may render me useful to my children, I read them both with equal eagerness; and I find much innocent instruction in Chesterfield, that a mother's heart

is

is inclined to adopt. Let rigid Moralists tell me, if they please, that all his parental merit is of the womanish kind; and that he is, at best,

Fine by defect, and delicately weak.

As to Johnson, I have indeed many jarring ideas of his excellencies and defects; yet, I believe, I may give you my notion of his character, comprized in a line, by which Pope has described the whole species. I shall conclude, therefore, by telling you, that he was, to my apprehension,

A Being darkly wise, and rudely great.

THE COLONEL.

Admirably applied!—You have expressed, in a single verse, what I labour-

ed

ed to ſay ineffectually, in a great deal of proſe.—So adieu, for this morning.

THE ARCHDEACON.

Stay, Colonel!—do not leave us ſo haſtily.

THE COLONEL.

I muſt be gone;—but I will not ſhut the door without remarking, that if Cheſterfield had known our Lady, he would have thought better of women than he did; and if Johnſon had poſſeſſed your true chriſtian virtues, my dear Doctor, he would have been a much happier being than he was.—So farewell.

FINIS.

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